

SOME HOPE AND SOME DESPAIR

ISSUE 3 - Summer 2001 - 3 dollars



ACTION TIME

COAGULA

THE CRAVATS

FLOWERS IN THE DUSTBIN

JON MORITSUGU

SOME HOPE AND SOME DESPAIR 3

So, how many years has it been? Hey, what the fuck do you want? I'm a busy guy. It's not like we're going through a fanzine glut. Quit bothering me! Here's a new issue. Now are you happy?!? Now can I get back to watching "Grounded For Life" and videotapes of "The Upright Citizen's Brigade" and "Mr. Show". Now can I get back to this thing that vaguely resembles a band called J Church but otherwise is starting to look more and more like my nom de plum? Can I please try to actually do some press for the next Honey Bear Records releases? Will you all please fuck off?!?

No, I love you. It's just the fucking heart medication talking. Yeah, I can't get drunk. I can't spend a year living from truck stop to truck stop. I'll be paying off these bills for the rest of my life. Shit, I dropped out of college when my scholarship money dried up specifically not to wind up in this situation! So, I'm fucked. Might as well be a "productive punk" as Greta Snider calls it and over-extend myself; a 34 year old entrenched in DIY / anarcho culture. If there's a merciful God can't I at least see the Giants go to the World Series? And you wonder how I became an atheist...

Okay, new issue... 'Sup...

First of all, as many of you probably already know, I've been working on a book documenting the anarcho "punk" scene of the late '70s and '80s. I've been doing quite a few interviews for the book and while I'm mostly using them as sources for quotes, I thought they were pretty interesting as interviews on their own. So, here are the first couple I did with Flowers In The Dustbin (who I learned about from their guitarist Simon who wound up playing guitar for Cringer for some time) and The Cravats. I think they're both quite interesting. The actual chapters of the book are being serialized in Maximum Rock N Roll. But I'll keep printing the raw interviews here...

I've also included interviews with Action Time (a great British band that I've been into lately), Mat Gleason (who does the amazing Coagula fanzine) and filmmaker Jon Moritsugu (my close friend). I think that they are all pretty remarkable people and I'm pretty happy with these interviews.

I was gonna run a couple of the articles I've written over the past couple of years. But I just ran out of room. Shit, 32 pages is enough! Maybe next time I'll treat you to a little of my inane writing...

I'll be taking advertisements again with the next issue. I want to have it come with a J Church CD or something. So, it's back to groveling for cash. Here are the rates:

Half Page = \$75
Third Page (5" x 5") = \$60
Sixth Page = \$35

Get in touch with me to reserve space.

Next issue is already in the works. I'm hoping to have interviews with at least a few of the following the French anarchist/ feminist band Cria Cuervos, Italian actress / director Asia Argento, maybe the Propagumbies (if those stoners ever write back!), Semiautomatic, ...And You Will Know Us By The Trail Of Dead, Lesser, and The Urchin from Japan. Of course, I'll also probably include a few more anarcho interviews and with any luck a third installation of my Beck Tour Diary...

See ya kids,
Lance
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There aren't too many bands in this world that I'm willing to help carry amps up a flight of stairs for. The night I saw Action Time for the first time was the night I had to help carry some of their gear from the Garage to their second floor rehearsal space. Shit, I don't even do that for J Church. Not with my heart condition! Anyway, I love the records and I think my reviews elsewhere in this publication speak to their musical prowess and my fanatical interest in them. Here's my interview with two of their intelligentsia...

Lance - Okay, basic banalities... Who does what and what did they do before? How, when and why...

E.B. Rockets - The action time are variously known as: Miss C C Rider (Beats); Jack Duvall (the Bass, smashing bottles); Miss spent youth & Susie Sparkles (Random percussion and sing); E.B. Rockets (guitars and general noise) and Rock Action (rants and keys and mayhem). Before the action time people did the same stuff listed - without the musical parts.

Lance - What's in a name? Is it Action, Time and Vision or is it the Time For Action?

E.B. Rockets -
It's kinda both...

Time for
ACTION, Time
and Vision (!) -
a call to arms.

Ms C C Rider -

The action of
time. The 7th
dimension
which is based
on a time
relative to
action the more
you move
(action!) The
murkier time
gets and the in-
betweens blur
and you get a
super-sound
which is an
amalgamation

of and yet a dissonance a million miles away from everything else

Lance - Who writes all the text on your records? In some ways it's like agit prop and in other ways it weirdly reminds me of all the little bits of stories that used to come with all the Sarah singles. What's it all about?

E.B. Rockets - All sleeve notes courtesy of Mr. Rock Action, mouthpiece of the Action Time, I'm sure he will answer this question (and more) in due course!

Ms C C Rider - This is one for blackseptember/rockaction/billynameless I'm afraid.

Lance - There's been a smattering of singles and now the album (all of which I love). Was all of the material written at the same time?

E.B. Rockets - Not at all, the first single dates back some years now. Generally we try to record the newest stuff that we've got at the time, except on the album where it was a conscious decision to do 1/3rd new stuff, 1/3rd stuff from our live set and 1/3rd old songs which we liked at the time but

never really got right.

Lance - Do the singles and the album comprise your original "set"? Or were any songs written specifically as b-sides or album tracks?

E.B. Rockets - Pretty much all the singles were from our live sets, like I said before the album was 1/3rd un-played songs. The B-side to *Rock & Roll* was recorded with the album in mind, but didn't seem to work in the context of the other tracks. Also, I know this sounds lame, but you can experiment a bit more on an LP whereas I think singles should contain real guaranteed hits, undiluted.

Ms C C Rider - This is Billy Nameless and Eddie Brackets game plan.

Lance - I saw a picture of the band before I actually heard the first single. To be honest, I was a little apprehensive of it being another batch of '60s sentimentalists. But I was pleasantly surprised that while there certainly is a '60s influenced, the sound and concept are certainly not nostalgic. Is the bands imagine and fashion a representa-

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tion of personal taste or is it a reaction to what's going on in music (especially in England, maybe) today? Is it a tribute or a deconstruction?

E.B. Rockets - We have always had this kind of image individually, but like you say, we are certainly not revivalist, in any way. It's just a case of lookin' sharp - We believe it's your duty as performers to look and act the part. If you don't believe in yourselves, no one else will. It's not a direct attack on the current blandness of modern British bands, 'cause we were always like this but it does make me mad the general apathy and lack of direction most bands contain.

Ms C C Rider - To my mind I think we're all doing what we do 'cos we love that sound and that image and those influences- I think we haven't consciously decided the sound to be the way it is (except for possible Billy) but its more by default of what we like to listen too/dance too/look at. Unfortunately I don't think there's any scene in London that bears any relation to what we're up to. I wish there was and then we'd have some bands to play with. We usually end up playing with bands that are our

friends and maybe have some musical instincts and values in common but the end product is very different.

Lance - Conscious or unconsciously, there really isn't another band I can think of that is wholly like the Action Time. Who do you feel are your contemporaries? Are there other bands out there that you feel a kinship with?

E.B. Rockets - I dunno, when we started there really wasn't anyone who we felt an affinity with, except say the Make-Up, but now there seems to be more (mainly US) bands coming out with the same kinda attitude that we have. I can't speak for all the band but current faves include ...Trail of Dead, ...Le Tigre, The Peechees (apparently The Strokes are cool though I haven't heard them yet myself).

Lance - The Action Time seem unrepentantly English. Maybe even specifically London-ish. It's sort of like if Pulp were for real and not whatever it is that they are. I'm not talking about patriotism or something absurd. But do you think that what you do is a mirror to certain endemic part of British life? If so, what exactly are you reflecting?

E.B. Rockets - If you're going to speak from the heart, you've got to speak about what's close to you and what you know about, so yeah, it's going to have a London-slant on it, can't be helped!

Ms C C Rider - I think we all love London even though I think I'm the only 'born/bred' Londoner.... various members of the band are passionate about different aspects of London / UK, whilst at the same time hating certain aspects. But we know it very well in its fucked up mixed up-ness... 'spose like having a child that is naughty, misguided and gets in with the bad kids but you still love it... if anyone out there is reading this and ever comes to London I recommend walking along the embankment at night and through temple. You'll see some disgusting examples of the extremes of wealth in England. The most glorious castle like houses and vast flats with homeless people and sad lonely drunks weaving around forlornly below... but it's amazing.

Lance - All of your records feel like a call to arms. They're a battle cry against something that's almost intangible but all the more-so frustrating. Do you think of your message as an existential challenge or do you have something more specific in mind?

E.B. Rockets - It's kind of a wake-up call, look at yourselves and your lives.... are you really happy or could you be achieving more, working for change rather than just letting it pass you by. Grab the moment, that sort of stuff...stand up against the pricks that hold you back.

Ms C C Rider - I don't know what an existential challenge is. The lyrics are Billy's but I think a lot of the songs are about frustration and trying to escape from tedium and banality and also celebrating those shiny diamond moments when something glorious shines through from the muck even if it's just a second of perfect harmony on a nobody's sunk without trace only single.

Lance - Now that the album is out, what next? Most bands fall into one of two categories after the release of their debut album; either complete ennui or a state of panic. Does either describe where you're at right now?

E.B. Rockets - Recording the album was quite a drain on us, mentally, and it did hold up doing live gigs, which is probably how we come across best. So yeah, we kinda getting back into playing live, more, promoting the LP and stuff, we have a few

singles that should be recorded soon. As for the 2nd LP, well don't hold your breath!

Ms C C Rider - Nope.

Lance - What's the first record you ever bought?

E.B. Rockets - Bad question, the 1st record I owned was "Prince Charming" by Adam and the Ants, but the 1st record I went into a shop and bought was "Rio" by Duran Duran (!), actually I still listen to that not very cool I'm afraid.

Ms C C Rider - "Toast" by Paul Young and the E Street Band. I brought it for my brothers X-mas present and liked it so much I kept it. This pattern has persisted through out my record buying life. If I ever buy a record for someone I have to get myself one too ...unless it's buying my mum Bob Marley albums...

Lance - What's the last record you bought?

E.B. Rockets - Haven't bought too many LP's this year, currently collecting all the 70's stones back catalogue, liked the last Trail Of Dead album.

Ms C C Rider - 'o beatnik' compilation of French garage/folk/ 60s pop stuff.

Lance - If you could have written one song that somebody else wrote, what would it be?

E.B. Rockets - Anything off "Searching for the Young Soul Rebels".

Ms C C Rider - Could be facetious here and just mention an incredibly high earning song ...but really? Lee Hazelwood one about 'please won't you tell your dreams to leave my room alone' or maybe "Sunday Morning" by Velvet Underground something beautiful like that anyway. Or maybe "Louie Louie".

Lance - What's it like in the tour van with The Action Time? Is it chaos or silence?

E.B. Rockets - Depends, it can be either, usually starts with one and ends with the other, in no particular order.

Either way I wouldn't recommend it to anyone!

Ms C C Rider - Depends on whether a show went well or what... Sometimes everyone huddles in different corners like mini-armies and the driver is like the safe zone...

Lance - What do you folks do outside of the band?

E.B. Rockets - We go out a lot, some of us manage to hold down full-time jobs, others don't bother. We don't work very fast as a band so we need all the free time we can get!

Ms C C Rider - In our dreams revolutionaries, west end musical stars, the most kick arse bassist/guitarist etc in the entire world etc etc. Really? Shop assistant, food writer, shop assistant, journo, teacher, unemployed scum

Lance - Do you folks have any other musical projects going on outside of the band? Fanzines or record labels? I know that Delia is usually in five or six bands...

E.B. Rockets - Yeah, we all have extra-curricular activities, whether it's other bands, DJ'ing, putting on gigs for other bands, etc.. The girls in the band also have their own Dance troupe!

Ms C C Rider - My band list is seriously low at the moment. If anyone wants a drummer, guitarist, singer let me know. My main criterion is that a band dresses well. Or at least entertainingly. I see no reason for visuals not to be great. It doesn't detract from the music. Sometimes it means people take you less 'seriously' but they are usually jazz-rock wankers.

Lance - Do you feel that the English music scene in some ways fosters creativity in its bands? It's hard to imagine a band like The Action Time starting over here. In the states, nothing is really appreciated on a cerebral or conceptual

level. At least not in music or art...

E.B. Rockets - I don't think we were really appreciated when we started out, that's why we started. - To do something different to everyone else, it did take a long time to find the right collection of people who felt the same way and wanted to make a difference, however and I'm sure that would be the case anywhere. We're really only starting to get attention now that our album is out (no-one really listened for the first 3 years!).

Ms C C Rider - I think maybe in London rather than England. It's very easy in London. A million venues, musicians, labels etc. access to loads of free 'culture'. Every band I've ever been in is appreciated a million times more the minute it splits up. At that point everyone starts going 'oh I would have loved to brought your record, seen you live, put you on' blah blah blah. Oh well!

Lance - So, in hindsight, how do you feel about the album? How seriously do you take it? Are you proud of it or do you think of recordings as souvenirs to the live gigs?

E.B. Rockets - Personally, I'm very proud of it. The amount of effort it took to even get it to the level it is was exhausting, and at some points it really looked as if it would never get finished. It's cool that it exists and is receiving good response. Given that, if I had to do it all again, it wouldn't be the same record, we learnt a lot about ourselves and our strengths and weaknesses in the studio, and given more time I think we could have improved on it a great deal. But that's for next time...!

I think you should push albums as far as you can in the studio, beyond what you can produce on stage. It's not muso, it's just records kind of have their own identity and personality and you should encourage that and let them go where they want to.

Ms C C Rider - I think the drumming is a thing of beauty and should have been turned up way higher!!!! I didn't enjoy making it and unfortunately remember that when I hear it. There are some top quality songs on it. The live thing is way different from the recorded thing. They are set about in totally different ways as totally different projects...

Lance - How has the reaction been to the record so far?

E.B. Rockets - Really positive, especially abroad. I think people are into the idea of us as a band maybe more than the record itself, I think it's been a great advert for us and a taster of what we can achieve in the future.

Ms C C Rider - Bafflingly good.

Lance - What's next for The Action Time?

E.B. Rockets - Gigs, and more gigs. Hopefully Europe and the US later in the year. Depending on finances.

Ms C C Rider - Some gigs. Some matching stage outfits. A train to Sheffield.

Lance - Any last comments?

E.B. Rockets - Yeah, just to say thanks for writing interesting questions, I don't usually do these types of things, but this had a good feel about it. Cheers!



THE ACTION TIME VERSUS THE WORLD



Mat Gleason, the editor of Coagula, describes his publication best when he calls it a "punk zine for the art world". I sort of stumbled upon it when I was killing time at some Market Street bookstore. The orange cover and bold title glared out at me: "Most Art Sucks - Five Years Of Coagula". A quick flip through the book and I was convinced. A scathing indictment on the Art World establishment full of swagger and sardonic humor. Take Sniffin' Glue and mix it with MRR's golden years and lastly add some of the rebellious, corporate baiting, humor of Crass. Coagula is both a forum for objective art criticism as well as an all out attack on the establishment. Here's my interview with Mat...

Lance - Okay, basic stuff: How did you get into art and the scene in LA? Did you go to art school? Can you really be accepted in that scene without having gone to art school?

Mat - One day some girl took me to a museum, I was in school in the Midwest in 1982 and she took me to the Chicago art institute, and it was like "whoa!" I got it, it was sort of like the first time I heard the Sex Pistols, which I know they sound pretty tame today, but if you put it into the context of 1978 and Johnny's voice sneering when everything else is Styx and Santana and Led Zeppelin, it was just like a whole part of your body waking up, and so it was like that with the art, It was like my eyeballs woke up.

I was an art major at Cal State L.A, but got kicked out, but you don't have to go to art school, although it is the best way to meet people with similar interests. But it isn't the only way, the only path to being a known artist. It is the best, but also pretty expensive.

Lance - How did you get into punk? What were some of the bands you were into when you first got into it? Do you follow it anymore?

Mat - Punk appealed to me the minute I read about it, I think it was actually in the newspaper. I knew there was punk out there, but I didn't know where to find it. There was a record store near where I lived called Up Another Octave and they had punk albums, and one day I went in to buy a Kiss album and instead I bought something else, must have been the Pistols or Ramones, this is like '79, I think, so pardon the Alzheimer's. It was just that moment of truth. I liked the first wave of L.A. bands and the first wave of O.C. bands, so that would be like X, Black Flag, the Germs, Circle Jerks. Fear I probably saw a hundred times. And Social D, Adolescents, T.S.O.L. It's funny because in art, I tend to like the first wave of artists in any movement more than the ones who came later. Like I like Manet or Pollock more than I like Renoir or Sam Francis. I follow punk a bit now. Of course I follow Down By Law seeing as they named a song after me (Mat Gleason is God), but with punk today, it seems either you get corporate America or demo tape hell. But punk is sort of a way of life beyond being a purchaser of records. The punk philosophies vary wildly, y'know? So I am more of a freedom and integrity punker than a vegan leftist. I am sober now, so I guess that makes me straight edge, ha ha ha. That is one religion I never considered joining but had to stay alive.

Lance - What's the connection between Coagula and Flipside? Did you ever actually work for Flipside? Do you

still here from AI? He's probably the nicest guy I met the entire time I lived down there...

Mat - I started a TV show on public access in La Mirada, a suburban pit just like the one every punk comes from, and I wrote a letter to AI and asked him to review albums on the show. La Mirada is next to Whittier, so he came down with his wife Hud and Hud's brother Gus and we taped an interview and he said the one thing that summed up punk for me better than anything, "Don't sell out, sneak in." I was chiding him, trying to get him to say that the Go-Go's were selling out because they

MAT GLEASON FROM...

were signing with a major label, if you can believe how long ago this was, and he refused to agree with me. He said that line and I was left speechless, which is a fucking rarity. I never wrote for Flipside but I would always buy the issues. If I had enough money for one album and the new Flipside was out, I would buy it instead of the album. No Mag was another great zine at the time. AI is great, when I do see him, it is always nice, but neither of us go out to shows much. I managed AI's Bar (a different AI altogether) for two years and my hearing is shot to shit, I think his is as well. I see Gus all the time.

Lance - Do you think of Coagula as being in any way connected with punk? Ethically, aesthetically... Do you think of it as a "fanzine"?

Mat - Absolutely. It is a punk zine for the art world. Nothing more, nothing less. Don't sell out, sneak in - all the way to your top, not theirs, and when they start inviting you to the parties, don't let up on them.

Lance - Coagula is one of the funniest zine I've ever read in my life. I don't even know what you're talking about half the time, and I still think it's funny when you really go after someone. What do you think is the appeal of Coagula to people not entrenched in the LA art scene? I mean, I'd never even heard of Christopher Knight or Larry Gagosian before reading your stuff...

Mat - Most people would rather go to a dentist than to an art gallery opening, because they perceive everyone there as snobby elitists. That is half true. The people we rake over the coals are the bad guys. Pretty simple. They are Foghat and Lynyrd Skynyrd and Journey, and I feel like I am Johnny Rotten screaming "I am an antichrist." It sounds cliché to say it, but I really feel that way. As a writer, it is gratifying to have an audience. I like that people who don't know who the big shots are get a kick out of my writing, that is a very good sign. I love writing and I enjoy to no end that the commoners are getting a kick out of the lunacies perpetuated by these stuffy fuckers.

Lance - A lot of the stuff you talk about (shallow trendiness, greedy bastards, conflicts of interest between different segments of the art world) come off as being more symptomatic of bigger problems. If you could even put it in a nutshell, what would you say is the main problem in the LA art scene? Is there one person that needs to be taken out with extreme prejudice?

Mat - The big problem is the myth that art is a career. I view it more like being compelled to make art, like a band that has to

tour and play gigs and record, not to make money, although that is not bad, but they do it because they HAVE to, it is their life. The bigger problems are all based on careerists grabbing the little crumbs that are there from the hands of the real artists. George Herms, who is a genius, a great artist, told me that the only sin was glamour. That made a lot of sense looking around at the fucking parade.

Lance - Do you think that there is any sort of resistance to the status quo in the artworld? Or just the occasional voice in the darkness?

Mat - It is lonely at times. Sometimes I go to a gallery opening and you just see so much fakery and shallowness. But at some punk shows you get record label hucksters, or gangs, or whatever, or cops breaking up shit, and you get sick of going out for a while and you either stop going or you DIY. I opened a gallery in L.A. because I knew the real elitist pricks would never in a million years deign to come in, and so my opening receptions are always really great parties, and the artists know they will not get reviewed by the upper echelon critics. So I don't get any careerist assholes looking to climb the art world ladder of success. I end up with what I consider to be great art shows by REAL artists. Art collectors have been coming, that's weird. But that is the beauty of DIY, sometimes your thing clicks and sometimes it don't and since there ain't shit you can do to make it click, just make it yours.

Lance - Do you ever find yourself having to slag off friends who's art sucks? Have you ever lost pals over a bad review?

Mat - I have managed to avoid reviewing shows. What I usually do for a friend is tell them to find someone to review their art show, because I am all for real messy democracy, not dogma or ideology. But if someone cannot get over a bad review, that tells you more about them than they usually have led on.

Lance - On the other hand, have you ever had trouble with people you hated coming after you? Have there been any slander suits? I mean, these people seem pretty pretentious... Back alley beatdowns? Some of these people seem pretty shady...

Mat - The best thing about the art world and critiquing the asslickers is that they are by their very nature cowards. Cowards get lawyers though, and so I have learned a great technique. The minute you get a letter from a lawyer, you write two letters: One hand scrawled on wrinkled loose-leaf like a lunatic, not threatening, just schizo babble about them conspiring with the Pope and British Intelligence against you. You send that one to the lawyer who is after you. The second letter you type on letterhead real professional, you complain in very reserved tones that this lawyer is harassing you with frivolous and malicious litigation. You send that letter to the State Bar Association. This works so well, and when I tell lawyers this trick, they get real huffy, so I know its a keeper. See, that's punk, it doesn't matter if I listen to Miles Davis or Crass tonight, if you can stay free by your wits, it doesn't matter what you wear or listen to, you're a punk. When people threaten me in person I just tell them to sue me, that I would love to get them

in a deposition and question them about their secret dealings with money and sex and publish every fucking word they say.

Lance - It seems like if you're a new artist and you haven't sucked up to this system and gone through Otis Parsons or Cal Arts or one of these schools, you don't really have a chance of being noticed. Isn't it possible that something more relevant is going on somewhere else in the world and the art world is completely oblivious to it? Outsider art or something?

Mat - The schools are only good to go in and challenge the fuck out of people, but then you get kicked out. I've been kicked out of Saint Paul High, Cerritos College, Fullerton College, two colleges in the Midwest and Cal State L.A., so I know a tiny bit about challenging institutions - it cannot successfully be done by one person. The art schools try to advertise that they are the way to art superstardom. But plenty of artists don't go to them and still succeed. My favorite is this artist, Sharon Ryan, she spent four years hanging out at all the local grad schools, their social events, art openings, got to know everyone and traded studio visits, and was always polite and asking questions, and now she is a bigger art star than almost any of the hundreds of graduate students she hung out

...COAGULA

with, and they all have student loans to pay back.

It is almost a certainty that the great art of our time is being made outside of the art world. Hopefully it will make its way into the public eye before it disintegrates or is sold at a swap meet. That is the real killer when it comes to art, be it painting, punk, poetry, anything: how does one get an audience? And even after that hurdle, there is the whole thing about compromising your art for that audience and a million et ceteras, but having readership, listeners, viewers, that is the toughest thing. The art schools promise them but do not, I believe, really deliver that.

The problem with outsider art, it's like the twelve bands you used to have to sit through before the Dead Kennedys played. I still believe that is what caused the Wilmington riot, too many bands and their friends thought they were rock stars and fought the security guards, locked them out at one point, which was funny until the guards brought the cops back with them. I was standing on a milk crate that held up the sound board's platform watching the show and saw the whole fucking thing go down. Outsider art has a real admirable lawlessness to it, no rules, purity and all, but you wade through so much crap that the party ends before the good shit ever happens. You also might get a sapping of your belief that anything better is gonna come along. If you think you're being fooled by a minimalist painter or a conceptual artist, think about someone whipping out "innocent" or "naive" art all day and night. That's a worse con, like when the metal bands all went grunge, but really just wore different clothes and cut out the drum and guitar solos.

Lance - If there were five artists that you would want everyone to know about, who are they and why...

Mat - Living artists that you might have a chance to see, other than those I show at my gallery, one is Llyn Foulkes. He is an old guy who was a beatnik artist who makes really intense critiques of corporate America, especially Disney. He paints so good though, the rich corporate fuckers by the stuff. Like when the frat boys started listening to Holiday in Cambodia, it was tragic, but it was a victory in the short and long term. Long it might make a difference in how they think, short, it did validate the fucking music. If Llyn was a shitty painter ragging on Disney, at some point you gotta say "So fucking what."

George Herms, he is brilliant, he makes assemblage, he's part of the beat tradition as well. The beats were just punks who liked jazz and had less to be pissed about and more freedom to exploit and enjoy. Kim Dingle, she makes little girls in easter dresses who just rage and trash everything in sight. Manuel Ocampo, of course. Diane Gamboa, she is one of the few people I have ever seen paint characters who are incredibly sexy but terrifying at the same time, without any illustration cliches at all. Very powerful stuff.

Lance - What's the shittiest art you've ever seen?

Mat - I saw a painting of Adam and Eve doing it doggie style while the snake watched. But that one was so awful it stayed with me, so in a way it was great. The art that is shittiest is the one with the built in attitude of superiority, one that ridicules part of the audience. Mike Kelley is the progenitor of that type of art. I stopped buying Sonic Youth albums after he did one of their covers. Perfect timing, too. They won't be doing another Daydream Nation or Sister anytime soon.

Lance - Aren't you ever compelled to paint again? I mean, if you're looking at all this stuff all the time, wouldn't you know best what not to do? Don't you ever feel like 'fuck, I

can do something better than that'?

Mat - COAGULA is my art. I was always frustrated painting because I knew what I wanted and could not create it and wouldn't settle for shit. I am much happier with my writing. I'll write an essay or a short story and make it perfect. I couldn't do that with art and so I stopped. Lots of artists waste their lives in the wrong medium. I got lucky.

Lance - How hard is it distributing Coagula? Where do you mostly sell to? It must be hard to get a museum's gift shop to carry you when they might be under attack any given issue!

Mat - Again, art world people are mostly cowards and avoid confrontation. The obliviousness is just a shield. We distribute it to anyone who will take it. It isn't allowed in a lot of galleries, but the people who own those spaces go to the galleries who carry Coagula and pick up a copy and read it.

Lance - Is there anyone else out there doing what you're doing? Is there any other fanzine or magazine that you feel you have any sort of connection to? Writers even?

Mat - No art magazines, that is for sure. I read a punk zine any chance I get. It is a great art form, definitely inspired me and I feel connected to them as an art form, although I am not writing about music at all. Writers I like? Not any art writers, they'd all shoot their mothers for an invite to the next cocktail party. God, I learned more from the Circle Jerks singing Beverly Hills, Century City than I ever learned in a fucking school.

Lance - Anything else you wanna tell the kids?

Mat - Avoid cliches, cops and crystal meth. Read Burroughs, Bukowski and Gerald Locklin. The best bands have at least one girl in them. The best art tells the truth, or an amazing lie,

The Most Overrated Artists of the Twentieth Century as Voted by the Readers of Coagula

1. Julian Schnabel

The insufferable bombast, the infernal posing, the pseudoliterate pretension; is he really overrated?

2. Joan Miro

The best advertisement against modernism.

3. Keith Haring

Basing a career on appropriating kindergarten stick figures may land you in a few collections, but taste catches up with everyone, eventually.

4. Georgia O'Keeffe

Her commission to paint the ladies' powder room of the Rockefeller Center epitomizes the true appropriateness of her art.

5. Frank Stella

Like Dylan, should've died in 1966.

6. David Hockney

Refer to Matisse (#9) sans all but the trash compactor.

7. Robert Motherwell

Elegy to a big American ego.

8. Helen Frankenthaler

Better remembered as the other of tie-dye.

(Tie) 9. Henri Matisse

Three floors of MoMA could have been condensed into two galleries and one trash compactor.

(Tie) 9. Pablo Picasso

A big dick.

11. James Rosenquist

He was doing bad David Salle twenty years before Salle!

12. Jeff Koons

Too bad they don't have cosmetic surgery for talent!

(Tie) 13. Marc Chagall

They'll give anyone a retrospective...

(Tie) 13. Salvador Dali

The persistence of pedestrian concepts...

(Tie) 13. Donald Sultan

As appealing to the eyes as his tarred lemons would be to the palate.

16. Jim Dine

See Rosenquist comment above (#11) and merely substitute Schnabel for Salle.

17. Wassily Kandinsky

Just because you're a pioneer doesn't mean that you're great.

18. Francesco Clemente

#18 on the overrated list, arguably #1 on the worst list.

(Tie) 19. Frank Gehry

Commissioned by Disney - case closed.

(Tie) 19. Hans Hofmann

The Ab-Exer's Richard Simmons.

Here's an interview I did with Shend and Robin Raymond Dallaway for my book on anarcho "punk". It's for a chapter I'm working on concerning The Cravats, The Very Things and other projects they worked on.

Lance - So, where are you from? Redditch? Is that right? Where the hell is that?

Shend - Yes, a small English new town in the Midlands. Part of Birmingham which is, or was the English equivalent of your Detroit. The British Motor City which had it's heyday in the '60's then ran out of money and began to decay.

Lance - Before Cravats, had any of you been in previous bands?

Shend - No, Robin Raymond and myself were at school and went to see The Stranglers in Birmingham in '77. It changed our view of everything. The next day we formed the Cravats

Shend - We pressed up 1000 7" for £400, of 'Gordon', did a proper cover and took one to give Peel at a gig he was doing in Stratford upon Avon. I wrote apologizing for appearing as goats. He played the record twice that night and gave us a session the next week. We did four Cravats Peel sessions, one Very Things session and a DCL Locomotive session.

Lance - What were the early gigs like? What was the audience reaction to what you were doing?

Shend - Total confusion. We didn't do two-minute guitar thrashes and swear. We all wore black evening suits, we had a saxophone played through weird effects, we had a man sitting on stage watching TV and reading the newspaper, we miked up vacuum cleaners and coffee percolators, we used a theramin, we had cassettes with speech loops on that we would hold up to the mike (this was way before sampling). We got spat at a

THE CRAVATS

with one acoustic guitar and a pair of bongos. No-one could play any instruments but we got drunk and screeched through the night.

Lance - What kind of musical backgrounds did you folks come from? The band seemed almost classically trained at times.

Shend - Non whatsoever, but because we didn't know how to play we were influenced by the music from TV shows and once we'd been joined by sax player Svoor Naan who could play we let John Barry theme tunes lead unto temptation.

Lance - What was the idea behind the name? Does anyone wear cravats anymore?

Shend - At the time everybody was calling their band the Killers, The Death Suckers etc. and we just thought our name should be totally obtuse and set ourselves apart from the mass. Cravats are whimsical, very English, eccentric and so were we.

Lance - Was Da Da always part of the bands identity? Was there ever a time when Cravats were just a young punk band or whatever?

Shend - Both Robin and myself loved the Dada thing for its childlike attitude, its love of the ridiculous and its confrontational stance. We were Dadaists before we'd heard of it and punks because we realized we'd found a channel for our strange ideas.

Lance - What were some of you first recordings? Did you ever record demo tapes before you did a single?

Shend - The first recording we did was the first single 'Gordon' at Outlaw studios in Birmingham. We had not recorded anything before, even on a cassette player. The drummer didn't have a drum kit so used Judas Priest's kit in the studio. We had no idea what the hell we were doing and just did what the pot-smoking hippy on the desk told us to do. When he gave us this big tape at the end we were really confused as to what to do with it.

Lance - The story is that you did four Peel Sessions. How many did you do before you had a record out? How did you hook them up?

lot and we made people angry because they didn't understand.

Lance - Was there any sort of art or anti-art scene that could appreciate the Da Da aspects of what you were doing in the early days?

Shend - No.

Lance - Your first single was called "Gordon" What other songs were on that record?

Shend - Situations Vacant.

Lance - What made you decide to release it yourself?

Shend - As I said we knew nothing about the record industry and we'd recorded it and cut it before realizing that you send tapes to record labels. We sent the record to Small Wonder and they signed us.

Lance - What was it like recording the first single? What was the process of recording like in the early days?

Shend - Stoned hippy, eight track master, play live, Judas Priest's drum kit, two overdubs, 6 hours, done.

Lance - Do you think that after punk in the late 1970s there were more or less opportunities for bands like The Cravats that were doing something outside of standard rock-n-roll? Do you feel that there was more or less freedom in that time period?

Shend - Much more freedom. Bands such as Pere Ubu, Devo, The Swell Maps, The Fall, Spizz Energie etc were churning out stuff that would never have reached an audience in the days before. Folk were positively looking for ground breaking music and there were enough weirds and eccentrics to fulfill every taste and if you couldn't find an artist that filled your particular void you simply became that artist and did it yourself.

Lance - How did you hook up with Small Wonder? What made you decide to go with them rather than release another record on your own?

Shend - We sent the Gordon single to SW after we heard Bela Lugosi by Bauhaus and they signed us up. We didn't send out any other records. We just assumed you sent off a record and got signed, which is luckily how it happened.

Lance - Do you think lyrically, you were also mixing in

existentialist messages to your approach?

Shend - Many of the lyrics came from the stuff that was going on around us. What we'd seen on TV and personal experience, some even came from Robin's dreams and episodes of Thunderbirds and The Twilight Zone. They were always more likely to create an atmosphere than be literal.

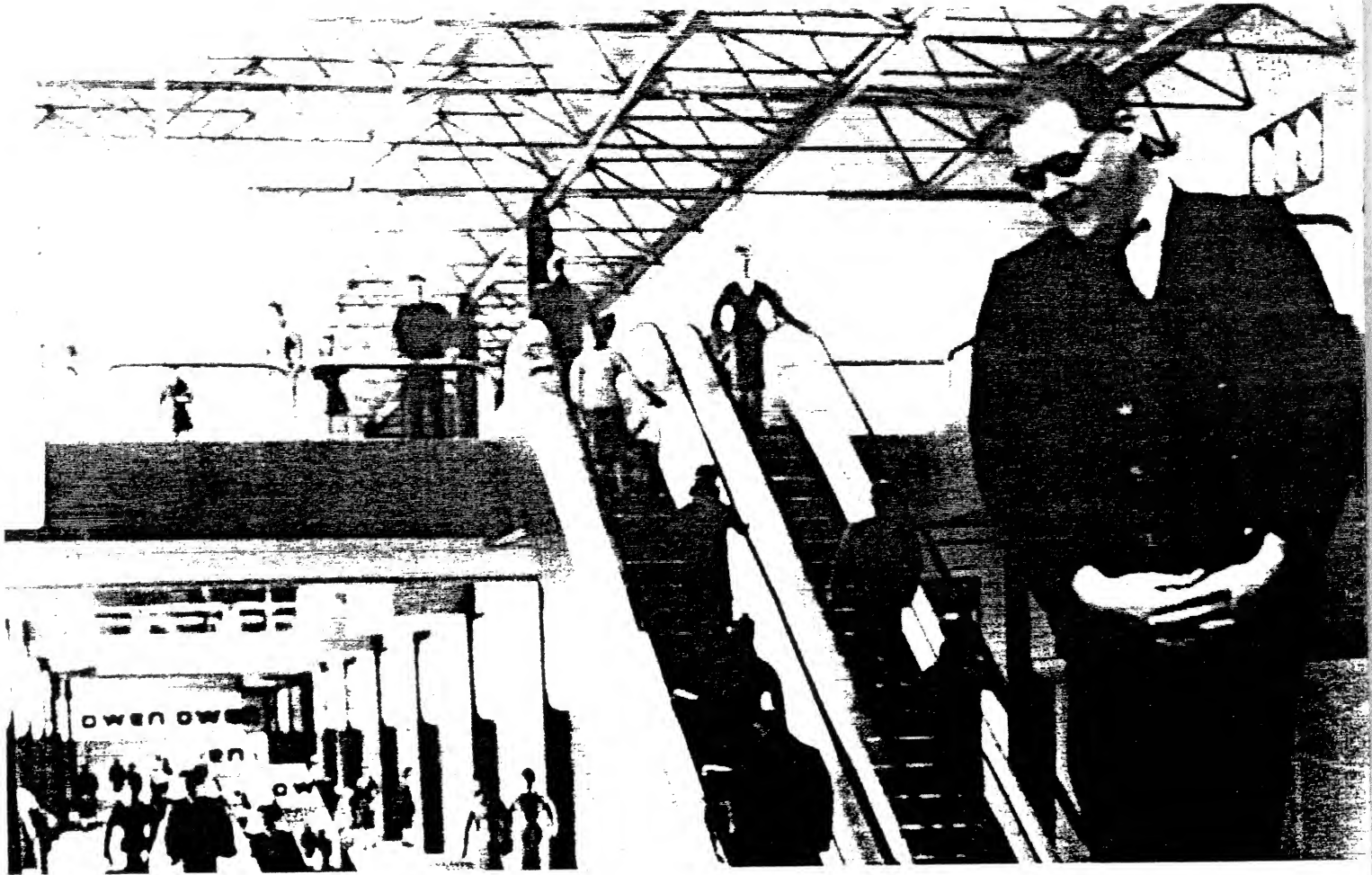
Lance - Do you feel that what you were trying to communicate was fatalistic and bleak? Or was there any sense of irony to any of it?

Shend - It wasn't bleak at all because behind any serious

were different and followed our own wibbly-wobbley path.

Lance - With the peace movement behind Crass starting, how connected did you feel to that scene? Your music was certainly more abstract and for a lot of bands, that seems to have made it difficult getting across of a crowd of kids who, at least in the early days, just wanted a punk gig...

Shend - We did some Rock against Racism gigs with Reggae bands which were excellent as the audiences were made up of many different elements. We also did some benefit gigs with



message we communicated to the masses was a humor and childlike curiosity, a glorification in our ability to communicate. How could anything be bleak about the fact we'd finally found a way to spew our ideas onto humanity.

Lance - At this point, how active was the band as far as playing live? Were you playing out a lot?

Shend - Depends what you call a lot? We seemed to be doing gigs every week around the country and London was obviously the big place. Unfortunately we were often put on with totally obtuse acts, such as Mod bands because no one seemed able to categorize us.

Lance - What bands (if any) do you feel like you were connected with at the time? Were there any other bands going that you felt like you related to?

Shend - Bands like The Fall, Pere Ubu, even Devo and The B-52's would have been good gig allies. The Birthday Party and Bauhaus were bands we played with on occasion. As well as Cabaret Voltaire and even Michael Nyman's orchestra. But we

the Poison Girls who Dave Bennett the original Cravats drummer later joined. But in general we were kept away from the others bands and did our own escapades.

Lance - The next single was "Precinct / Who's In Here With Me". This seems to be the first time that Cravats were actively using Dada strategy in the writing of the lyrics.

How do you reflect on the ideas that went into this single?

Shend - Precinct was about the new Redditch Shopping Mall that was foisted on the inhabitants whether they liked it or not and Who's In Here With Me featured the voices in my head that babbled continually. The Shopping Mall is now decaying and the voices in my head keep me company on long winter evenings.

Lance - Do you think that punk (what ever generation of it) had elements of Dada in it or do you feel like you were bringing these ideas into the punk scene? Taking into account your interest in Dada, what was it that drew you to punk and kept you interested in it?

Shend - Dada stuff was always in the Punk generation, whether it was the anarchist stance, making clothes out of garbage sacks and safety pins, or playing incredibly fast and using strange noisemakers. Dada is all around us always.

Lance - Was this single mostly to promote the record or was it planned completely separately?

Shend - We wrote something then released it then wrote some more. We never really understood what 'promote' means and stuck stuff out when the opportunity arose.

Lance - What was the reception like to the first few Cravats' singles? How did people respond to them?

Shend - A few reacted with gusto such as John Peel, a select bunch of journos and some freaky cat members of the public. Jello Biafra said nice things and Steve Albini scrawled our lyrics over his squat so I heard. The general public were blissfully unaware of our existence though so we didn't think we were changing the world, just changing us.

Lance - How did the press respond to them? Do you think that people were picking up on what you were trying to get across in the early days?

Shend - As I said some did and they tended to fanatical and very supportive.

Lance - The next record was the LP "The Cravats In Toytown". What was it like recording your first LP?

Shend - We recorded it in the basement of some guy's hotel in Torquay (a seaside town in England) for about \$1500. The hotel man knew bugger all about recording but we sort of muddled through and laughed and had a good time. The LP is a fine testament to what was happening in our lives at the time.

Lance - Do you feel that this record summed up everything you were about at the time? It's a cohesive record and like all of the better records that came from that time, it creates it's own atmosphere. Sort of like you enter Cravats Planet when you put it on.

Shend - Exactly!

Lance - There's a real playfulness and absurdity to the record. But, you were also a part of a movement that could be seen as politically militant and strident. Do you feel, as far as Dada, you were trying to reflect the politics of the Berlin Dada or the return to child-like play of Tristan Tzara's Dada?

Shend - Very Tristan Tzara, very kid in a candy store, very optimistic, very lunatics taking over the asylum, very joy de vivre, very teddy bear with fangs.

Lance - What does the title refer to?

Shend - There was a big toy store in Torquay called Toytown and we were there most days. We always felt and still do, that is a perfect explanation for how we fitted in to the greater scheme of things.

Lance - Some people felt that the record was to cerebral for a time when there were so many issues being struggled over in the anarcho scene. How do you respond to that?

Shend - If they thought it was to cerebral they obviously had the insight of a sock so their feelings are totally irrelevant.

Lance - Along with Dada, the Situationists often talked about play and the desire to return to it in adult life. Do you think that there was any influence from those ideas at the time?

Shend - We just liked wallowing in the joy that can be gleaned from anything and everything. I personally had never heard of

'Situationists' at the time although Robin may have because he was clever.

Lance - How did people react to the record? What are some of your recollections of people's reactions on hearing it?

Shend - Some laughed, some danced, some were furious and full of hatred and many thought we were mad. All fine reactions in our book.

Lance - How busy was the band at this point in terms of playing live? Was there a lot of touring?

Shend - No, we never toured just played gigs here and there whenever we felt like it or were asked nicely.

Lance - What was it like on the road with Cravats?

Shend - Lots of strange noise makers, vans full of weird people in strange clothing, an armchair and TV for Mr. 'H' to sit on stage and watch, crates of chocolate milkshakes, scary Birmingham gangsters who liked us for some reason and protected us from trouble, dodgy secondhand equipment, a huge 'C' in a circle backdrop, suits, ties and white shirts and a big vat of strangeness.

Lance - The next recording was for "You're Driving Me". This is probably one of your better-known singles. I have to say that I really love that record cover. There's the feeling of it being a readymade with all the plumbing. But there's also a lot of humor to it. Marcel Duchamp once said that the best art in the United States was in its bridges and plumbing. Was the cover any sort of reflection on that?

Robin Raymond Dallaway - We were aware of that connection with the ready-mades and stuff for the 'You're Driving Me' cover. White porcelain looms large in my imagination. The photos were taken in my small flat in Redditch, me standing on the end of the bathtub persuading Shend to put his head further under water.

Lance - The next single was "Off The Beach". Do you feel that Cravats were mostly a singles band? What pushed you to record so many different singles?

Robin Raymond Dallaway - Interesting that you should hear a Crass connection with 'Off The Beach'. I don't hear it myself, I think of it more as a warped rockabilly track, although it was recorded at Southern Studios where all Crass material was. We were never happy with the single version of the track, and were pleased that we were able to release the best version, recorded on an eight track mobile, on the 'Colossal Tunes' LP.

Lance - Despite being a one off record on a lesser-known label, how did the "Terminus" single do? What was the reception to it like?

Robin Raymond Dallaway - I still love 'Terminus'. And no, it didn't do very well, despite getting great reviews. Largely because it was with a tiny label who screwed the release up, and did nothing to promote it. It is partly what made it important to release it on 'Colossal Tunes Out'.

Lance - Either way, what was the reaction of Crass supporters to the record? How do you reflect on that built in audience of Crass releases? Do you feel like they understood the nuances and differences in all the bands that recorded for the label? Do you feel like they related to what Cravats were doing?

Robin Raymond Dallaway - I think 'Rub Me Out' broadened the range of Crass' label output, it was well received generally, and particularly by people who were into the label's output. We've

never really worried over whether people would pick up on everything going on in a track. You just can't think about that when you're writing. But it is good when people do recognize those things, and maybe hear new elements after a period of time.

Lance - There was a really upbeat feeling to the record despite the dark subject matter. The Cravats seemed to be the only band on the label that didn't mind a public image of that involved humor and fun. Is that something that was an intrinsic part of what you were doing?

Robin Raymond Dallaway - Humor was a really big part of what we were doing. Just part of what we are. Black (grim) humor is a big part of life in the industrial Midlands of the UK. I like to think that we were able to be optimistic about a 'spirit of resistance' and being outside convention.

Lance - A lot of people confuse what Cravats were doing at this time with what Crass were doing. Crass claimed

that they weren't concerned with making records and that the music was just an excuse to get across messages and ideas. The Cravats on the other hand, seemed to be desperately trying to break outside of the "punk" framework and/or aesthetics. Do you feel that there's any truth to that?

Robin Raymond Dallaway - I don't think we were desperate to break out of anything. Part of the punk aesthetic for us was that it could include disparate elements. It seemed to us to be about an attitude rather than a narrow style thing. From the outset the Cravats were never a straight down the line punk band. We were always into jazz, ska, funk, classical, all sorts of stuff. We were really interested in the music, but of course our politics informed our approach. 'Rub Me Out' produced by Penny was the closest we got to Crass in terms of form and content, but otherwise I think we were pretty much different to Crass.

Lance - What was your relationship to Crass and the other



The End.
The Cravats
Spring 1979.

bands on the label? Do you feel like there was a community between band members? Were there any bands in particular that you felt close too?

Robin Raymond Dallaway - We were very good friends with Penny Rimbaud, who produced some tracks for us, including 'Rub Me Out'. He was really into what we were doing and gave us a lot of encouragement.

Lance - The next record was "The Colossal Tunes Out" LP. This record seems to be sort of an odds and sods with different versions of previously released songs and other singles tracks. What was the idea behind this record?

Robin Raymond Dallaway - I'm not sure why you would think of 'The Colossal Tunes Out' as being a collection of odds and sods. I much prefer it to our first LP. Many of the tracks were recorded in different studios, But it is the tunes that we were playing live at the time and it hangs together well, in our opinion, and it contains our favorite Cravats tracks. As I mention elsewhere, I think that rather ironically, it covers a period when the band really 'hit its stride', just before its demise.

Lance - Do you feel like there was an element of sci fi to your imagery or were you more interested in the campness of old sci fi? It seems to have influenced at list this record title. How deep of an influence was it?

Robin Raymond Dallaway - I always imagined that we used more of the 50's sci-fi 'B' movie elements in the Very Things stuff especially 'The Bushes Scream While My Daddy Prunes', but I guess that there's some of it in the Cravats too. We liked lots of things about those films: We don't think of them as 'camp', I think they are too naive for that, We like the atmosphere that many of them have, some of them just chimed with our imaginations, many of them, especially The Twilight Zone original series seemed like bits of dreams we'd had or that we might have had. Many seemed like unintentional parables, and we could give them a different meaning by re-telling the stories, or using taped sections of dialogue or sound.

Lance - This record, I think, marked the beginning of DCL. Could you expand a little more on the basic concept behind it? Was it actually a record label or just a name for a school of art experimentation?

Robin Raymond Dallaway - Shend and I had just become a little tired with the restrictions of the band, or any band. The Dcl (Dadacravat Laboratories) was set up to be a framework within which all sorts of creative activity could be done, but mainly it was so that we could pursue a number of diverse musical directions without them compromising each other. We just wanted the tunes and artwork of each project to be of a particular nature. DcL Electric Recordings was the title of our label.

Lance - The flexi released with the LP was the first statement on behalf of the DCL. It was done by splicing together several different pre-recorded speeches largely for purposes of contrasting sound quality. Was this in any way a tribute to the Beats' cut and paste style or was it more of a reflection of the punk style of the ransom note?

Robin Raymond Dallaway - We were mindful of the Beats cut-up stuff, and had been part of the same sort of thing happening with punk, but we were also looking further back to Da Da. We were interested in allowing chance and randomness into some aspects of what we were doing, and also interested in the subconscious having an influence. For instance, for the first

DcL manifesto disc we devised a way of randomly selecting different geographical locations to record sections of the speech part. We wanted that sense of being in the real world, as well as achieving that variety of sound quality.

Lance - Do you think having so much previously released material on the record helped or hindered it?

Robin Raymond Dallaway - I'm not sure that it made a difference either way. It was just a body of work that needed to be together.

Lance - On the record, there are different versions of some previously released songs. What was the reasoning? Were you unhappy with the earlier recordings? Or do you feel like these versions are completely different approaches to the songs?

Robin Raymond Dallaway - Only some of 'Colossal Tunes' had been previously released, and then only on 7" 45s. It was always intended as an album, but it was an opportunity to, for instance, release our own version of 'Off The Beach', which we preferred to the one, released by Small Wonder. It just seemed to us that the band was doing its best stuff ever, but that our best recordings were fragmented all over the place, on singles, on Peel Sessions, or unreleased. I think that we thought we'd already recorded the best versions of tunes that we currently had.

Lance - Did you already know that the band was going to be splitting by the time you released this?

Robin Raymond Dallaway - We had wound band things down by the time 'Colossal Tunes' was being compiled. But I don't think that Shend and I thought it was necessarily the end of the band.

Lance - What were the reasons for the Cravats splitting? Were there conflicts between members? How many line-up changes had there been over the course of the bands existence?

Robin Raymond Dallaway - Shend and myself were founder members of The Cravats and remained the creative force within the band as the line-up changed, although the few changes happened early on and the same line up played on everything except the first single ('Gordon'). The line-up on everything else was myself (Robin R Dallaway, guitar and vocals) The Shend (bass and vocals) David Benett (drums) and Richard London (aka Svoor Naan, saxophone). The band was pretty democratic, but Shend and I wanted a bit more freedom to pursue other things, to work in different ways, with different people. And I think we were all a bit tired of each other at the time.

Lance - I'll be honest with you, I don't even have the last 12" called "In The Land Of The Giants". I'm guessing it came out way after the band split up. What was the story behind this record?

Robin Raymond Dallaway - 'The Land of The Giants' 12" comprised of four tracks: The Land Of The Giants, The Shroud Of New York chapters 1 and 2, and Execute His Will

Lance - What was the story with the songs that were on it?
Robin Raymond Dallaway - I'd been working on some tape collages, so had Shend, and we had a tune that sounded like it was going in the direction that Cravats material had been taking. Of course it has similarities with Very Things stuff of the same period. Shend, myself and Robin 'Disney' Holland (The Very Things) played on those tracks. It was a kind of footnote really, after the demise of the Cravats as a working band, but

pursued a direction that we were heading in anyway. We released it as a four track 12" entitled 'Land Of The Giants' with Reflex. The track 'Execute His Will' is one of my favourite things that we've ever done. It was pretty time consuming spinning in so many tapes before sampling, but a really satisfying result.

Lance - There are a million labels called Reflex Records. Could you tell me a little about this one?

Robin Raymond Dallaway - Not much to tell about Reflex. Small label distributed through Rough Trade, moved to the Midlands, near to us, and were enthusiastic about releasing stuff. They did release all the early Christian Death stuff over here for what that's worth.

Lance - By the time the band split up, had The Very Things or The Babymen already started?

Robin Raymond Dallaway - Whilst the Cravats were working as a band, with the four of us, Shend and I concentrated on that. We didn't start any of the other projects until after the demise of the Cravats.

Lance - The year after "The Colossal Tunes Out", The Very Things released their first single on Corpus Christi called "The Gong Man". Do you feel like this was in any way a continuation of the Cravats or at least the bands vision?

Robin Raymond Dallaway - "The Gong Man" feels very unlike the Cravats to me. But it's bound to have a lot in common given that Shend and I were the main architects of both.

Lance - The following single and LP were both called "The Bushes Scream While My Daddy Prunes". They were also on Reflex Records. What made you decide to leave Corpus Christi?

Robin Raymond Dallaway - We didn't leave Corpus Christi as such. Corpus Christi was a Crass spin-off label that gave us the opportunity to release the first tracks that we had recorded as the Very Things. We got involved with Reflex (who had re-released the 10,000 Maniacs stuff in the UK) because they had recently moved to the Midlands, near to us, and because they were very keen to do the Very Things album.

Lance - How would you describe musically what you were trying to do with that period of music? Did you feel compelled to make a certain type of music reacting to the way the industry was heading in the '80s?

Robin Raymond Dallaway - Working on the 'Bushes Scream' LP was like building an alternative universe for ourselves to inhabit. A bit of a collage of all our interests at the time - obscure psychedelic guitar music, 50's sci-fi, 60's pop music and the troubling, baffling, absurd nature of society at large. Again we were using a lot of 'found' material spun in from tape, before samplers were around.

Lance - The last record on Reflex was a 12" called "Mummy, You're A Wreck". To a certain extent, there were still some similar ideas that had originated in the Cravats. But there was an added level of dementia. What were some of the ideas behind this record?

Robin Raymond Dallaway - 'Mummy, You're A Wreck' was written and recorded when we were living on quite an eccentric orbit, and written partly in memory of my late alcoholic mother. I see it as a companion piece for 'The Bushes Scream While My Daddy Prunes' - both about neuroses, about how the pressures of life warp people.

A well know BBC producer said he didn't like it being played on Radio 1 because it was disrespectful to mothers.

There you go...

Lance - The next release for The Very Things was a single called "The Motor Town" on DCL Electric Recordings. Was this record in some way a tribute to Motown? Was this the only recording for DCL Electric?

Robin Raymond Dallaway - The single 'This Is Motortown' was the only true release on Dcl Electric. I wouldn't exactly call it a tribute to Motown, but I wanted to express the influence it had had on me when I was younger, growing up in a very unglamorous part of Britain.

Lance - Next, you spent some time with One Little Indian. The results were a single (7" and 12") for "Let's Go Out" and an LP called "Motortown". What made you want to record with this label in particular?

Robin Raymond Dallaway - We wanted to get involved with One Little Indian because Derek Birkett (founder on OLI) had put together a really good production team including Brian Pugsley and Ray Shulman. It coincided with our wanting to record in a different way and with our writing of material that suggested a particular, more 'poppy' production. This resulted in the 'This Is Motortown' single, which we released on Dcl Electric. We recorded the LP with the same team, which was conditional on us releasing it with OLI.

Lance - What influenced this major music shift for you? What were you listening to at the time?

Robin Raymond Dallaway - I grew up listening to Motown, Ska and Soul music. My brother was a DJ. We also live near Birmingham (the UK's motor city). Motown is one of those influences in our music which in previous work maybe wasn't obvious, but was always there, and there just came a point where it came more surface and we decided to give full vent to it.

Lance - The final record for The Very Things was an LP called "It's A Drug, It's A Drug, It's A Ha Ha Ha..." on Fire (who also re-released the first two LPs). It didn't come out until 1993, which meant a 7-year gap between releases. Was this a posthumous release? Was the band even together at this time?

Robin Raymond Dallaway - The most recent releases were the three re-released Very Things albums (see also Q. 78). Actually, not a re-release in the case of 'It's a Drug', but the first time that material had been compiled and released. We had always planned that Very Things album, but it got sidelined, as we got busy with Very Things touring, recording and releases around the time of 'This Is Motortown'.

Lance - What was this final record like? Was it more dance influenced or more analog type music?

Robin Raymond Dallaway - 'It's A Drug' was originally intended to be a sort of spin-off, a 'Gothic Excursion' pursuing the strand of material in the Very Things output that was drawing on dark English Victorian Music Hall songs, sci-fi 'B' movies etc. Originally we had intended to use a string quartet for the whole album, making it a complete piece. The tracks were recorded separately, at different times. But at least it was eventually released in compilation form.

Lance - The Babymen and DCL Locomotive both had one release each. DCL Locomotive did a 12" in 1982 called "King Midas In Reverse" and The Babymen did a 12" in 1983 called "For King Willy". How would you describe these recordings?

Robin Raymond Dallaway - 'King Midas In Reverse' by Dcl

Locomotive and 'For King Willy' by The Baby Men are two of the 'project' band releases from DcL, and because they are so different, remind me why we set up DcL as we did - to accommodate a spectrum of music types. I love the 'King Midas' single - and we had a good time recording it. I remember one summer being really into a mutant rockabilly thing, sitting in Shend's back yard with a wrecked Ford Capri, playing cards. It became a big hit in New York gay discos for some peculiar reason.

Lance - How do all of these bands relate to each other? What exactly is meant by DCL?

Robin Raymond Dallaway - The DcL was set up by the Shend and myself in order to 'free ourselves up'. I think we felt a bit constrained by being members of the Cravats and although what we did musically afterwards we very linked to, and developments of, what we had been doing, we felt that we had to suspend The Cravats and have a break from the other band members. With hindsight it maybe would have made more sense for us, and people buying our records, to have continued simply under the Cravats name. The DcL title was Penny Rimbaud's (Crass) suggestion. We really wanted an umbrella organization, under which a whole variety of things could be done - a record label, 'happenings', artwork, film as well as music.

Lance - Why did the Babymen and The Very Things come out on One Little Indian and not DCL Locomotive? And who did release the DCL Locomotive record?

Robin Raymond Dallaway - We wanted to concentrate on The Very Things at that time and part of moving the Very Things to One Little Indian was that they would release some other DcL material. In a way, I think that there was more 'mileage' in The Very Things and maybe we should have continued with DcL Electric (our label). Fire Records re-released the three Very Things albums for us, using the DcL identity. Ideally we'd like to do the same for all the other back catalogue (The Cravats, DcL Locomotive, Baby Men)

Lance - What ended up happening with all of those bands?

Robin Raymond Dallaway - The DcL is really Shend and I, bands involved different members of the same small group of people, centered around Shend and myself. It included Richard London, Robin 'Disney' Holland and David Bennet. The Cravats was a band that spawned many other projects; one of those projects, The Very Things, in turn, became a band.

Lance - How do you reflect back on all of this and especially the Cravats?

Robin Raymond Dallaway - I felt we suspended The Cravats as a working band at about the right time. We'd pretty much had enough of each other, and we were producing, I think, our best stuff. Time to go. With DcL: We made the whole thing too complex to be easily understood with the multitudinous band names and identities.

Lance - Do you still feel connected to the ideas of the Cravats and are they still relevant to you? Or do you they feel dated?

Robin Raymond Dallaway - I still really like a lot of it. Also I think much of it stands the test of time pretty well. I particularly like 'Terminus' and 'Off The Beach' and 'There Is No International Rescue'. We were using taped 'samples' before samplers, along with 'found' tunes, and a wide variety of instrumentation, including kids' toy instruments and ethnic instruments.

Lyricaly, I still like them too. I would hope that they still have something to say.

Lance - Do you still think of yourself as a Dadaist?

Robin Raymond Dallaway - The Dadaist approach was appropriate for that project (The Cravats, DcL) at that time. I have to change the way I write all the time, but that approach and way of looking at things is bound to color the way I write now. Life is chaotic. Embracing the absurd and using it creatively is to me an important part of being expressive.

Shend - I agree.

Lance - Have you been playing any music since? Do you have any interest in it?

Robin Raymond Dallaway - I've never stopped writing and playing stuff, and at the moment I'm working on a chill-out dance type project, at the moment titled 'Silverlake'.

Shend - I had a band called 'Grimetime' for a while who did an album called 'Spirit of Disgust' using imagery from American 60's Angels films and am currently doing mutated, Latin, croon tunes as 'The Puritanical Love Choir'.

Lance - What music do you listen to?

Robin Raymond Dallaway - I listen to a lot of jazz. Stan Getz, Miles Davis. I also listen to a lot of house and drum 'n bass. All sorts of stuff, in fact.

Shend - I'm listening to Rammstein, Dirty Beatniks, Nelson Riddle, Monster Magnet and Shostokovich amongst others.

Lance - During all that, what did you do outside of the band? What outside interested have you had along the way?

Robin Raymond Dallaway - We were completely immersed in DcL. Either rehearsing and writing or organizing events, taking photographs, making plans.

Lance - Do you think you'll ever try to re-release all the Cravats material?

Robin Raymond Dallaway - It's been on our minds for some time to re-release the Cravats back catalogue, along with the other DcL material. At this very moment we're in the process of reviewing it all, thinking about what form it should take. So it should happen soon.

Lance - Are you still in touch with any of the ex-members?

Robin Raymond Dallaway - Shend and I are in touch all the time, and I occasionally bump into Rick London (aka Svoor Naan), who is playing mainly jazz now.



I first heard of Flowers In The Dustbin when their guitarist, Simon, became my roommate in LA and eventually became the second guitarist in Cringer for a while. I've since loved everything I've heard of theirs. Here's the first interview I did with them for my anarcho book.

Lance - How did the band form and how did you meet each other? Had any of you been in previous bands?

Gerard - We all meet through living near each other round South London - a lot of people in what you could broadly call the punk scene knew each other because there weren't that many of us. Me and Simon were in a band called the Anabolic Steroids (deliberate misspelling), Chas had been in a semi-band called the Nightmare. Also, Simon and Bill were in a band called Fear.

Chas - I saw Gerard's band Anabolic Steroids and thought he was a great

performer and also seemed more serious about being in a band than the people I was playing with, we got on friendly terms and got together to form a band, but for the first year or so went through about 10 line ups

and spent most of the time writing and rehearsing (including attempts to cover "Seasons In The Sun" and Nat King Cole's "Nature Boy" - bad ideas but indicative of our - G's especially - desire to get out of punk rock - musically that is). In summer 1983 we actually played a gig - in Telford in the midlands which seemed to be a haven for imaginative dropouts at the time - then we started getting gigs around the squat scene in London and the Mob's singer saw and liked us and offered to put out a record. A week before the recording, G and I decided that whoever was playing drums and guitar for us that week was no good and we went to see Si and Bill (who had sat in on drums for us before) and stole them from the band they were in - a machiavellian act of which I am still proud. I had known Si and Bill for a while before that 'cos I was at school with Si's brother and he knew Bill.

Lance - When the band first formed, what kind of music were you playing? Had you always had the identity and concept associated with "Flowers In The Dustbin"? Were you ever just a straightforward punk band?

Gerard - No - the reason I left the Steroids was because I wanted to move beyond barre-chords and shouting, which at the time seemed to have outlived any capacity for imagination. I never thought that 'straightforward' punk was living up to what I saw as its enormous potential.

Chas - See above. I liked Crass at the time and was a big Dead Kennedys fan but I also really liked early Pink Floyd and Syd Barrett. We were always looking for something else to listen to - I remember going to Woolworth's with Gerard and buying some chamber music LP to see if there was anything interesting about it (There wasn't. It was shit, but that's experimenting for you).

Gerard - I don't remember this at all...

Chas - That's cos I was the sap who wasted 5 pounds on it!

Gerard - ...but it did strike a thought in my mind that we also derived a lot of inspiration from films: The Tin Drum and Maitresse are certainly two that me and Chas went to see on more than one occasion in an attempt to soak up some sort of mutual inspiration.

Chas - Yeah - and punk all-nighters at the scala.

When Bill and Si joined the band they strengthened that because Bill in particular was always introducing new kinds of music - as a drummer he was ahead of his time, trying to bring in the sort of rhythms that by 1990 every "indie" band was trying to glue onto their smiths impersonations.

Lance - What made you choose a line from a Sex Pistol's hit as a band name? What deeper meanings did it hold for

FLOWERS IN

you?

Gerard - I liked the imagery of it, and the duality of it being a Pistols lyric, but having the hippie image of 'flowers' in the title. Chas - Gerard came up with it and I don't remember there ever being any alternatives or a "what shall we call ourselves" period. The name came first, everything else followed, and it always seemed the right name (and in retrospect even more apt).

Lance - How did you get into punk rock? Had you been into it long before the band? How did you get involved in the anarchist punk scene and Crass and all that?

Gerard - I got into punk through the Pistols shenanigans, particularly watching the famous Bill Grundy interview on telly. Crass I got into by seeing an mail-order advert in a British music paper for The Feeding Of The Five Thousand - I was attracted by the fact they'd put a record out that was 17 tracks for 1.99 GB pounds - ah, I thought, maybe here's a group who are keeping the faith, which hardly anyone was at the time. As far as the 'anarchist punk scene' goes, I think we just drifted into it by virtue of common ideas and a way of getting gigs easily. That might sound flippant, but not many people would give you a gig back then. To me, it was still just the punk scene, as were the other myriad scenes that were just beginning to split off into their various factions. I remember Bauhaus describing themselves as a punk band in a fanzine around the time, which I'd still argue was true.

Chas - Being younger than Gerard I was only aware of the Pistols from a distance (things could have been so different, I remember my mum turning off a TV documentary about them pre-Grundy after about 10 seconds - "we're NOT watching that").

I was more into the outrage and troublemaking than the music of bands like the Pistols and the Clash, although I liked X-ray Spex. I got hold of a Crass single because I had heard they were the most extreme punk band - I had no idea at the time what that entailed I just liked the concept! I don't think I was influenced by their politics much because they weren't saying anything that wasn't already obvious to me, but then once you find like minds it becomes a lot easier to make sense of what you think.

Gerard's right about the anarcho scene. At the time we got into it there were very blurred lines between the anarchos and the goths - because the goth bands were just bands they weren't corralled into a fashion - so a lot of the people who might see Crass and the Poison Girls might also see the Mob or Blood and Roses and might also see Southern Death Cult or

mailed to us with a list of questions along the lines of...

What do you think of Anarchy?

What do you think of Peace?

What do you think of vivisection?

Do you eat meat?

Blah, blah, blah, a complete failure of imagination, and a lot of bands sets seemed to me to be an attempt to answer those questions in the correct way, like filling out a form. Also - it didn't occur to me at the time - but we were increasingly cut off from what was going on musically. When you think of the big "alternative" bands of the mid 80s, none of us really listened to them - although I got into the Fall later on and Si liked Spear of Destiny. When The Smiths brought out "The Queen Is Dead" they inspired a generation of shit bands, but I didn't even hear the record for about 3 years...

Gerard - But Chas, I remember when the Smiths first album came out, we both thought it was great on at least one level - Morrissey was writing lyrics about not wanting to work - I remember we enjoyed that.
Chas - That's

THE DUSTBIN

Sex Gang Children. Then the idiot journalist boyfriend of the singer of a band called Brigandage tried to lump some of these bands as a "positive punk" movement and it all backfired ludicrously so bands started to define themselves as anarcho bands or goth bands. But for a few months in 1982-3 there was a really lively scene and even after that the "anarcho" scene in London was a mixture of all sorts of people and I think, like the Mob, we fitted into that because we didn't fit into it.

Gerard - I'd agree with that - though I'm still in touch with people from Crass, I seem to remember spending more time disagreeing with them at the time than being inspired by them. As Chas puts it, they made it easier by virtue of us not being the only ones out there and by bringing people together. But once 'the people' came together, I realized I had very little in common with most of them on other, more important levels.
Chas - Exactly.

Lance - There's a real "other world" feeling to the band. Did you feel like you were making music that was purposefully escapist or was it more of a challenge to the unimaginative songwriting that might have typified a lot of the punk/music scene in general at the time?

Gerard - I never really considered the music escapist in the sense of avoiding issues, but a lot of the imagery came from dreams (the sort you have asleep). I've never *just* listened to punk, and I did think a lot of it was lacking in honesty at the time...I was trying to express myself (surely the point!), whereas I felt a lot of folk were trying to re-express Crass or whoever, which struck me as self-defeating idiocy. I was probably more influenced by Melanie Safka than anyone else.
Chas - Absolutely. I remember we used to get these interviews

true - in fact I thought their first album was great and listened to it a lot - and tried to rip off what difference does it make musically - with some success I thought. But what I mean is that the queen is dead - which I have seen hailed as the most important/best album of the decade, made no impression on me because by then it seemed the group was already a parody of itself and I had been to see them at county hall and seen all these people worshiping Morrissey and shoving daffodils down the back of their trousers and it just turned me right off (it wasn't the daffodils just the follower mentality) So when they were at their most dominant I (and the rest of us I think) weren't interested.

Gerard - I also remember being in the Rough Trade shop (presumably earlier than this), collecting our mail, and the guy behind the counter pointing to a group of people and saying 'they're the Smiths', presuming we'd go over to say hello. But all I thought was 'they look like a bunch of students in long macs', so I didn't bother.

To continue with this line, I remember having protected discussions with All The Madmen about whether we should try and dumb-down our words for Smiths fans. Given that they're looked at now as pseudo-intellectuals within the pop world, there's a heavy ironic twist there!

Chas - I was listening to the Great Society and the Monochrome Set, Bill was into Led Zeppelin and Gerard was into Melanie. The Cure - did any of us even listen to them? And its not as if there were even any anarcho bands who we were thinking, I can't wait for their next record. Between the first Sex Gang Children album in 1983 and the Falls Bend Sinister in 1986 the only contemporary music that excited me was ours and the only other contemporary band I listened to was the

Cocteau Twins (the Doors I remember as being a band we all liked?).

Gerard - I think we all liked the Cocteaus, I hated the Fall.

Chas - Yeah I was on my own there.

We were constantly trying to create another world - but I wouldn't call it escapist - because we were actually trying to make a place to live in where the demands of the "real" world, namely having to waste time getting a job and doing things that didn't appeal to you were irrelevant and we succeeded up to a point - at least that's what I was trying to do I think all of us was in their own way.

Gerard - Well put.

Lance - I used to think that you sounded schizophrenic (which is part of the appeal) in that half of the songs seem alienated by a claustrophobic world that you didn't fit into. While the other half were excited celebrations of freakishness and abnormality. Does that make any sense to you? Do you feel like you were particularly one way or the other?

Gerard - I think perhaps schizophrenic is a bit of a strong word, but I know what you mean. More a

case of trying to deal with freakishness / abnormality and sometimes feeling able to cope proudly with it, but other times despairing a bit. Like we all do to various extents. Also, I wrote some of the songs and Chas wrote others, so maybe that had something to do with it.

Chas - It would be interesting to see a breakdown of which songs fit into which category and whether

Gerard's lyrics are one and mine the other, but I think it was just how we felt. I remember having a particu-

larly good time most of the time between 1982 and 1985. We were doing pretty much exactly what we wanted and that's an exhilarating thing - but the world made it hard and when you are doing the opposite of what everyone is under constant

pressure to then you are bound to suffer doubts and depression. Outlaws in the woods I think is the perfect celebration of what we were doing - come to think of it though I never knowingly wrote a happy lyric! Except a bit of "Vethixo Disco", I think. Also with the whole Joy Division fetish and the hard-line Crass follower types there was enough misery in the world and I think we were consciously moving away from that - one of the best gigs I ever went to was Sex Gang Children at the Clarendon - they had no message or meaning but the music - live anyway - really had a positive feel which was something I wanted to recreate. The song "Bible Seller" is an attempt to explain what we were doing and to criticize all those people who just treated Crass lyrics like a religious tract (I keep coming back to Crass. I thought they were great but it just got to the point where people were observing the Crass commandments in a sort of holier than thou way which I don't think had anything to do with what the band actually intended or were about).

Lance - What is the concept behind "Vethixo Disco"?

What is the intent of this metaphoric (I assume) disco?

Gerard - I made up the word Vethixo at a time when I was trying to write a whole new language (ah! the arrogance of youth!). The concept was to try and find our own space, away from the easy definitions like anarcho and punk. It was almost definitely a bad tactic though - I didn't realize just how much people clung to those definitions, and how much of an audience we lost by trying to go further.

Discos in England at the time were the sole preserve of straight, beautiful, perfect people, so it seemed an interesting image to have 'freaks run wild in the disco', which began life as a small poem in the first flowers booklet:

'I say I'm proud to be a freak
To cover up the fact I've got no choice
But insecurities still creep
Around uncertainties in my voice
Flowers in the dustbin, quite a hip name
Throwing wild images together
Music, use it, quite a nice game

It won't last forever

Feeling ripe to be put on a sideshow
'Freaks run wild in the disco'

Lance - Was "Stranger In A Strangeland" in anyway inspired by Heinlein? Do you feel SciFi and Fantasy played a big roll in what the band was about?

Gerard - I'd read and enjoyed the book.... if I remember correctly I might have been led to it by an interest in the Manson family. But songwise, I just thought the title was good (though I believe it was later used by Iron Maiden, aaargh!). I personally have no interest whatsoever in SciFi/Fantasy - give me the real world any day.

Chas - Yeah everyone I knew had a vague interest in Manson at the time and I'm sure that's why Gerard reacted 'cos I did too and I never read Sci

fi and don't have any interest in it. Funny how the biggest fuck ups can seem interesting.

Lance - What were the early gigs like? Do you feel that folks from the anarcho scene could relate to what you were doing?

Gerard - The early gigs were really positive - victories of spirit over musical ability.

In the anarcho-scene, such as it was, some people got really into it but more just wanted hardcore music and thrash bands.

Chas - I think we went through a phase after our first 3 or 4 gigs (after the first gig someone came up to me and the then guitarist and said "I really love the way you had your guitars out of tune with each other" after that we did sound checks)...

Gerard - ...that was one of Omega Tribe.

Chas - ...where we really hit form and people either loved or hated us - and either was pretty much fine with me at the time I remember abusing an audience for failing to listen to "Aim For The Sky" once and getting a round of applause for it. The



kind of thing was as big a part of the band, I think, as the music for the first year or so - something Gerard was really good at just disconcerting people and challenging their expectations in a way that some people really hated.

Lance - Especially at the height of the anarcho scene, where do you feel your roll as an artist ended and that of an entertainer began?

Gerard - At the height of the anarcho scene, I felt like a failed artist because they just wanted entertainers - punk equivalents of top ten artists. There was I wanting to change the world, and there were they, waiting for me to lay into a three-chord thrash about 'the system' without wanting to change the world at all. And I thought about the miners strike and I thought about the Irish freedom problem and I thought these middle-class wankers don't actually give a fuck. So I tried to seduce them with entertainment, and seeing as the world only got worse via Reagan and Thatcher, I'd say we all failed at the time.

Chas - I don't remember ever feeling an obligation or desire to entertain people until about 1986. Until then I just wanted them to talk about us afterwards [at worst] or completely change their lives [at best].

Gerard - Precisely.

Chas - We came across so many people who felt they had to ring up Crass for permission before they did anything and I recall just wanting to shock and upset those people as much as I had once wanted to shock and upset my parents. In retrospect we were perverse, we would never play a song just because people liked it - a song would get better and better each time and then it would peak and start to get stale and I'm sure no-one else thought so but us and then we would drop that crowd-pleaser and introduce some half baked song because it was new and we would alter the order of the set list from gig to gig so we didn't get bored.

If you want to go down well then play your best songs to death and work out the order which works best and stick to it.

We didn't care.

Gerard - I think, with hindsight, this was massively selfish and pretentious on our part, not to mention arrogant.

Chas - As I recall, we aspired to arrogance as a result of the Pistols' influence. I think what a band really requires is a synthesis of the sort of attitude we had with an appreciation of what will make the audience happy - our problem was we completely failed to temper this approach with either reason or humility (although I seem to remember Si being the voice of reason in this direction).

Lance - What other bands were going on at the time that you related to? Were there other bands that you felt especially close to? Do you feel like anyone else was doing something similar to what you were doing?

Gerard - Always thought the Mob were - mixing emotion with politics and not being afraid to show more vulnerable sides of themselves. To a lesser extent, Zounds, Omega Tribe, Poison Girls. We felt closest to the Mob, though, and it was they who put out our first record. I used to know Ian Astbury back in the Southern Death Cult days and thought he'd do a lot more than

he did, being an old Poison Girls fan.

I must say though, we used to get associated with other bands that I just couldn't understand - people I felt nothing in common with at all.

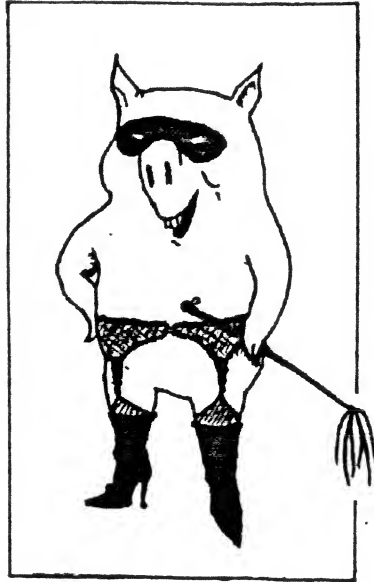
Chas - Oh come on now Gerard we did that tour with Feud and we loved them... only joking, we never, apart from the Mob, made any positive links with any other bands that I can think of, although we were on speaking terms with Blyth Power for a while - I don't remember us ever having a friendly relationship

with bands we played with, which helps explain how we got where we are today! Come to think of it one of the main reasons I stopped being in bands was that I was sick of being forced to socialize with people from other bands.

It was soundmen that we really failed to hit it off with. There are few more satisfying feelings for a musician than a soundman's throat in your hands.

Lance - What were some of the ideas that went into your artwork? It seems to be done by different people. But there are similarities in style. A tree woman. A Japanese woman. An S&M pig. What's it all about?

Gerard - The first two you mention were done by friends - it all just fell together rather than being commissioned. The third I can't actually remember at all (oops!) If there is a string of similarity running through them, it can only be



my/our taste.

Chas - Laurence Llewellyn Bowen did some of our early artwork - that surely is our claim to fame isn't it? But not the ones you mention - the pig was the cover of All the Best People are Perverts wasn't it - not sure who drew it

Gerard - A lot of the artwork on that tape was ripped off Audrey Beardsley, but I still can't remember the pig!

Chas - Gerard always picked the art on the basis of if no-one objects then that's that and in fairness his was a lot better than my idea for "Lick My Crazy Colours".

Lance - What exactly was the order of your discography? I know there was a cassette, 2 7"s and a 12". But I don't really know the order... I also think that something was on one of those recent Mortarhate singles CDs.

Gerard -

1) Freaks Run Wild In The Disco (all the madmen records) 12"

2) Nails Of The Heart (Mortarhate Records) 7"

3) Lick My Crazy Colours (Cold Harbour Records) 7"

The tape was (I think) between 1 and 2, but I'm not sure.

Chas - Yes the tape was then. We also put a track on a compilation tape before 1 called "Memorial". The tapes title escapes me, but it had something to do with bananas...

Gerard - "Composed Bananas".

Chas - Of course - how could I have forgotten. Gerard played bass and a woman called Sam sang. We also released a tape of the LP we recorded for Cold Harbour. But as they were bust we just sold it to people on our mailing list - or tried to.

Oh yeah - I bought the Mortarhate compilation CD and it was unplayable - I mean actually technically didn't work. I'd heard about it from someone in a band called Stratford Mercenaries who were touring the US and saw it there and discov-

ered it didn't work - why does none of this surprise me?

Lance - How did "All The Best People Are Perverts" (cassette on 96 Tapes) come about? How did you collect the songs for that?

Gerard - We knew Rob (who did 96 tapes) from the Wapping Anarchy centre and various acquaintances socially. But these friendships were more the property of Chas, Bill and Si than me, so hopefully they'll fill you in more on this one.

Chas - Were they? I knew Rob but "he was no friend of mine" and I never went to the Wapping Anarchy Centre. However as far as I remember the tracks on the tape were 4 track demos we recorded at our rehearsal studio and a live version of "Aim For The Sky". I seem to remember that we gave the stuff to Rob and the tape came out but we never really seemed involved in the process - never got any to sell I think - it was the usual story, once we recorded the songs we lost interest in the whole thing, perhaps Si and Bill know more.

Lance - How did you wind up doing a 7" with Mortarhate? Most of the stuff on that label seems like crazy hardcore stuff? How did you get along with the Conflict folks? Had you played with any of those bands?

Gerard - Again, Conflict were local to us - I think we saw a mutual piece of fun in doing the unexpected. I insisted the sleeve had to be color because all their others were uniform black and white. I can't say Flowers and Conflict were ever close but we were obviously close enough to do a record with them. The truth of the matter was that we weren't exactly flooded with record offers throughout our career, so any offer was gratefully accepted! Which isn't to dis Conflict - there was a broad understanding we were on the same side as Thatcher was tearing our country apart and Reagan yours. We were always more militant as people than our songs suggested - the opposite of almost every other band in that department!

Chas - I have a hazy memory that we arranged to record an album for Mortarhate and then forgot but that may be something we imagined. I remember meeting Colin - seemed like a nice bloke - and some other geezer in a pub and that was the extent of the thinking behind the record. They made 1000 sold them and then did nothing which is a shame 'cos it wasn't a bad single.

Lance - What led to you working with All The Madmen? Why was there only a 12"? Were there ever plans to do more?

Gerard - At the time All The Madmen was pretty aligned with the Kill Your Pet Puppy Collective (who did a fanzine of the same name) - I think we definitely felt kindred spirits there, so when they asked us to do a record, we were well up for it. I'm sure both sides would have loved to do more, but there was never any money basically.

Chas - Yeah if only there had been, All The Madmen was a great thing but the Mob was on its last legs by then and once they split up the money dried up - from a trickle to a desert.

Lance - The last single was on Cold Harbor. What was the story with that label? How did that come about?

Gerard - They were loads straighter - refugees from EMI who fancied going it alone. And we were loads more desperate, subconsciously aware that it was all over soon unless we got another record out. We were supporting the Cardiacs at Croydon Underground and their manager at the time was one of the Cold Harbour people. We'd begun to lose the plot, just getting out of it to avoid the cold reality of our various failings

as a band. They offered a way out and we, having lost the energy to focus on anything but the vague possibility of making a living at music, took it. I think at this point, we would have been happy to sell out to an extent, just to avoid having to get jobs. But of course, having lost the spirit, there was precious little chance of the public inventing it for us.

Chas - I wouldn't put it is bad as that, initially Cold Harbour offered us the chance to maybe make a living, and it was by then becoming harder just to live on the dole and make music. But we hadn't got a clue as to how to get a record label to sign us - we never tried to get anyone to offer us a deal or anything (I mean we made 3 demos and then just took them home and listened to them. Naive? - We cornered the market), but this bloke from Cold Harbour liked "Nails Of The Heart" and offered at least a chance to make records, which we took because we had no idea of how to get a record deal with anyone else. I dare say that from similar beginnings successful relationships have occasionally sprung - this wasn't such an occasion. They did get us the Fuzzbox tour [which was one of the stupidest pairings of all time] and pay for us to record an album - in our rehearsal studio on 8 track. There were 2 bands on the label and the singer of the other band was fucking the boss. The other guy - the one who liked our music - was an unbelievable balls up - he was late for everything, so, for a joke, a friend got him a clock that went backwards - but being a fuckwit, he put it on his office wall and then he'd turn up even later for things and go "that bloody clock". He arranged for us to make a video for our single and convinced us that we should film it up at an aircraft hanger where advertising airships live that fly over London - we were supposed to play in front while the doors opened (the fact we agreed to this suggests Gerard's analysis is right) but it took longer for the doors to open than for us to play the song, and anyway the finished video (which was crap) arrived at the record company about 6 months after we released the single. I'd call them cowboys but they didn't have the competence. In the end they went bust and the office burnt down in a dubious way (actually that's probably what happened to the LP master tapes - they were on a video cassette for some reason).

Certainly we weren't doing ourselves any favors on the consumption front at the time but I think the decline described by Gerard occurred later

Lance - What were Flowers In The Dustbin gigs like back then? I remember Simon talking about at least one gig where you all got pissed up. The band was rolling on the ground, laughing while you were berating a crowd for being students. Was that typical band debauchery?

Sounds good to me...

Gerard - See above. I do remember that gig though somewhat vaguely! It was Ravensbourne Art College (where the Pistols had played one of their first gigs) and the beer was all subsidized. Being students, their organization was such that we went on about two hours later than planned, hence we were all well pissed by appearance time.

Chas - Yeah this really wasn't our fault, I'd never been in a student bar before and so began drinking heavily out of dole-bred instinct, as soon as I saw the prices. But that wasn't typical - while its fair to say that debauchery went on to play a major part in our lives, that is the only time I was too pissed to stand up at a gig and I rarely went on stage drunk - two pints before you play was my rule - the more the better after. I don't

remember any other gig where our performance was impaired by consumption except on the Fuzzbox tour at Glasgow (and every gig our keyboard player ever played.) Our gigs were rowdy and debauched but I think we always tried to avoid getting so out of it that we couldn't perform - that wasn't what we were in it for. IN fact that was one of the reasons G and I kicked out the guitarist before Simon

Lance - Did you ever tour much? I think Simon also said something about you doing a series of gigs with Flux and KUKL. Also something about a tour with Fuzzbox, maybe? How were your gigs outside of London?

Gerard - Gigs outside of London were usually to about thirty people, though often ten of those would have hitchhiked to see us. We did one gig with Flux and KUKL and didn't strike any common ground at all, though diplomacy prevents me from going into detail.

Chas - I want the detail - in private if necessary - Chas. I know we didn't hit it off but I always thought it was because - whatever their merits before or later - both bands stank like two of the biggest musical turds of all time that night?

Gerard - The tour with Fuzzbox was our only real foray into the 'proper' music

business and was an education

I wouldn't care to repeat - it

shocked me how much emphasis there was on business rather than music.

Chas - Absolutely - it was great fun but by then everything was being spoilt -

for me anyway - 'cos I had started to take the idea of a career in music seriously so instead of just enjoying myself I would worry about whether the guy from Melody Maker would slag us off just because one of us pissed on him in the dressing room and whether we were playing to the right audience.

What a fuck up that tour was - they were a joke band billed as playing "a festive fun night out" - as one reviewer put it "For a festive fun night out Flowers in the Dustbin are about as appropriate as the pledge" - exactly. Fuzzbox rehearsed the mistakes they would make on stage - they made the same mistake every night and had a mock row about it.

In retrospect my happiest memory is bundling into the train and driving off as a guy came out of the Astoria in London and shouted - who are you?

Flowers in the dustbin

well you'll never play here again

I'm not sure, but I like to think we laughed.

But we did play some good gigs out of London - okay there was the night we played to 10 people in Nottingham when there had been a tornado in the city and we got paid two pounds; and the night we turned up at Bradford and the organizer had forgotten to promote the gig or turn up. But we played to some decent crowds at Bristol and Telford and the other time at Bradford. And we did the Mars Bar tour - when Mars bars did a deal that if you ate enough Mars bars (no problem)

you could get cheap National Express coach tickets and so we played a few dates on the strength of that, taking everything up on the coaches.

Lance - Why did the band split up? Internal pressures or had the band just run its course? Did any of you go on to other things?

Gerard - We split up because we were all drinking too much, smoking too much dope and had lost any semblance of the original vision that made us any good. Which caused the internal pressures and is a surefire sign the band had run its course. We all went on to other things, but not really musical. I'm a writer and web designer in London, Simon's a barrister in London, Chas teaches British history in the States and Bill is a lorry driver in Majorca.

Chas - Yeah Gerard's answer is about right - It's a shame because we were really good for a while, and despite what G says I think we were actually a pretty good band for about 4 months when we came off the Fuzzbox tour, we still had some good songs and could play well both individually and as a unit but by then other things were a problem. By that time Si was out of the band and we never really appreciated how having

FLOWERS IN

four friends who are in a band is much much better than trying to recruit people to fit in to your band. We didn't all like the same thing or see things the same way and that was why it was quite interesting when we got together. In retrospect we should have tried harder to keep that. Then there was the fact that it's a good job we never made any money as it's only a question of who would have died first - enough said. As it was I don't think any of us was in a particularly good way by the end of the band - I know I wasn't.

Finally - we lost because living out your dreams is pretty difficult to achieve - once we started thinking we could make a living out of music and that was the way to escape from the world, we just got sucked into worrying about whether you've won enough fans over and said the right thing and pleased the press from Belgium etc and then you might as well be working in a bank.

I was in another band after flowers which made some great demos I think but never got anywhere and I got more directly involved with politics working for a group that took up cases of people fitted up by the police. Now I'm a lecturer. The system, as they say, sucks you in, but it can be a vampire or a cocksucker depending on how you play it and as blowjobs go this one's pretty good.

Lance - How do you reflect back on those days? Do you think it was all too naive? Are you happy with what the

band did?

Gerard - Reflections? Both immense pride and serious cringing. Was it all too naive? Yes, but in a beautiful way. Am I happy with what the band did? I'm happy with some of the beautiful songs, but I'm not happy we sold our souls for a few crates of beer in the end. More than anything, I feel I did more with my youth than a lot of people, and the spirit is once more untouched.

Chas - Yeah pride and cringing - but enough of the former to be prepared to answer for the latter. Its funny how at the time we thought the threat to the ideals we started off with was Thatcher's new Britain. restart etc etc and it turned out the threat was really our own freedom to be so lazy sometimes, but then isn't that always what old people think - we enjoyed our youth and now we find the memories of the debauchery are worth little and think if only we'd worked harder we'd have more worthwhile memories of more concrete achievements - maybe.

Since I gave up being in a band my life has improved hugely but I still regret the fact that I gave up. When I was 17, I left school to be in a band and I am absolutely satisfied that I

ridiculous but I didn't give a shit. In those days you could just sign on for a bit and do something worthwhile, while the people who liked working and having money got on with it - and the world was a better place for it. I'm also glad that beneath the social fun of it there was a political undercurrent however naive and unrealistic it might have been, that encouraged people to question the assumptions and defy the conventions.

Gerard - I might add that personally I feel the greatest contribution the whole anarcho scene made, as well as the most successful, is the impetus it gave to the animal liberation movement, which is certainly one thing I personally feel the same about now as I did then. We only referred to it once lyrically, on Nails Of The Heart - 'killing animals but not taking the blame', but as I've said, we were more militant outside of the band than in it. We weren't naive enough to think that songs were going to change the world; though I think close examination of our words makes it obvious where we stand. Our 'trouble' was that we weren't interested in shouting 'fuck the system' just so our egos could be swelled by loads of blokes waving drunken clenched fists above their regulation mohicans.

And I'm proud of that.

Chas - ... 'regulation mohicans' I knew that phrase would have to come in somewhere

As for the band though, the anarcho scene was somewhere where we could play but it had little influence on

THE DUSTBIN

did the right thing and all those people who never just do what they really want to do might as well kill themselves now and leave more air for the rest of us.

Lance - How do you reflect on the anarcho scene? There was a time when it seemed like you felt alienated even from that scene. But you were certainly a part of it. How do you reflect on what it represented and what it means even today?

Chas - I wonder if what was essentially a storm in a teacup but exaggerated these days, particularly in the States. I consider us an anarcho-band, the whole scene was ... well, unironic and not anarchist. We were a bunch of anarchists in a band who hopefully had a bit more strength of character and individuality than to need to fall-in with the strictures of the time and place. That said, I didn't feel particularly alienated from it because I never really wanted in.

Chas - I don't know about "anarcho scene" I'm glad that I grew up at a time in a city when you could go out most days a week and go and see a band and meet people and that you could wear whatever you liked be whoever you were and there was a place to go and there was a network of squatted venues and cafes and homes. Today people dress in uniforms again and conform too much and worry about what job they'll get when they leave college. I remember walking down the street and they would stare at me and they probably thought I looked

what we played. Did the word anarchy ever come up in one of our songs? "Vethixo Disco" maybe. We had only one song about war and hardly ever played that and anyway it was hardly typical. It seems to me that a lot of that scene consisted of people in little provincial towns listening to Crass in their bedrooms and producing fanzines about bands they had never seen and seeing bands that rarely played outside their towns. And for those people there was a scene and in some respects it was fairly uniform, but in London there was no real absolute division between anarcho bands and other bands - same with audience. I dare say in other larger cities the same was true. All of that is just an impression. I felt alienated from the anarchist scene in the sense that I had no desire to belong to anything at first and later I suppose I identified myself as a squatter and felt part of that scene (all downhill from there really its better not to belong), but although I would have called myself an anarchist I wasn't interested in joining an anarchist group.

If there was an anarchist scene then out of that scene came a lot of the influence for environmental groups etc and real political work, not all of which I would sympathize with but there was something to it. A lot us - including Flowers In The Dustbin - could be called middle class drop outs - but so what - you're middle class, you have a choice: rebel or conform.

Jon Moritsugu and I have the same birthday. We're both from Hawaii. We both dig what the other is doing heavily. For me, he sums up underground film in the '90s and beyond. We got a chance to do this interview before the release of his latest film, SCUMROCK. Much respect to the man!

Jon Moritsugu interviewed by Lance Hahn.

Lance - Basic banalities; how did you get into from? Had

most doing it yourself. Isn't your style of business unprecedented in film?

Jon Moritsugu - I am completely cynical about "major film distribution deals." Just like the "major label record deals," they are structured to put fucking stars in your eyes and then screw you. So after a coupla years of dealing with legit distribution, I decided to start self-distributing my own stuff (though I still

JON MORITSUGU

you done any film before school? Did you major in semiotics/linguistics?

Jon Moritsugu - I started getting interested in film in high school - y' know, made a couple super-8 films with friends. In college, after burning out in the history department, I started doing the film thing. As far as semiotics, yeah I studied it, but only 'cause it was required in order to get into the production classes.

Lance - How do you reflect on your days at school? Do you think there's a certain part of you that is still rebelling against the academic establishment?

Jon Moritsugu - School was o.k. I definitely had problems with the "academic establishment," especially the heavy, mind-numbing theoretical shit that was required. It seemed like people got off more on "talking about art and culture" than actually "making it." Pretty boring. My biggest dream was to steal all the film gear from the semiotics department and then burn it down.

Lance - Do you think living in NYC had a lot to do with the attitude of your earlier films?

Jon Moritsugu - Yeah, probably. I didn't live in NYC too long... something like six months, but it was quality time as I was living in a YMCA, going to a fucked-up art school, getting mugged, etc.

Ah, the big city experience! Loved them bagels.

Lance - What made you move to SF? A lot of people there are transient to certain degrees. Do you think it's your final stop?

Jon Moritsugu - I felt the call of the west after one too many east coast winters, so I moved to SF cuz it was a cheap, artsy, and there was a SCENE. But shit changes. SF certainly is a different sort of city now - no plans to move but it is always a possibility.

Lance - How would you compare the underground scenes of NYC and SF then and now? Is that a reflections of the film schools or the psychology of the city?

Jon Moritsugu - Well, in the old days, there was a distinct NYC vs. SF (east coast vs. west coast) thing going on with lots of experimental and underground shit coming outta both cities. NYC stuff was a little more confrontational/in your face while Cali stuff was more hippied-out. Unfortunately, "corporate culture/control" has decimated the film scenes on both coasts. Both cities are now fucked-up and almost totally lacking in cool shit.

Lance - A lot of underground filmmakers spend time looking for a major distribution deal. You've been more successful than

work with smaller non-exclusive distributors). I was tired of doing most of the work (booking the films, collecting the money, handling press, shipping the prints) but getting paid virtually nothing (and getting paid last)... People are finally wising up in the film scene and doing shit on their own and without corporate backing. In fact, several larger films have turned down mainstream distribution deals in order to do the "self-release" thing.

Lance - Some once describes your shit as Dischord like. Your DIY business style does have more in common with the larger indie and punk labels. Do you think you've been influenced by this? There is a lot of similarities between the business practices of you and FUGAZI/CRASS...

Jon Moritsugu - Actually, the American underground/hardcore scene from the early 80's is what inspired me to take more control of my films and their distribution. Since the film scene was so slow to change, I looked to the music scene for a "model" of self-distribution. Yeah, labels like DISCHORD, SST, TOUCH & GO, bands like MINOR THREAT, GI, CRASS, etc. - they definitely influenced me. I liked their no bullshit, personal approach, their ability to still get the goods to the people at the right price (IE no \$20.99 CDs), and ultimately their firm belief in their music, man.

Lance - What is SCUMROCK about?

Jon Moritsugu - SCUMROCK is my new feature that I am in the middle of editing right now. It's a sprawling epic... about rock-n-roll winners and losers, pretentious art-obsessed kids, back-stabbers and people gettin' old and freaking out... wall-to-wall rock and noise soundtrack... Yeah, this movie is fucked up and great.

Lance - Is this the first film you've shot on Digital Video? Do you think video will entirely replace film?

Jon Moritsugu - I actually shot on Hi8 video, you know, old school analog gear. I want to drag video through the sludge in the gutter, you know, degrade it! FUCK DIGITAL VIDEO!!!!!! At this point, I feel that DIGITAL VIDEO is only a "consumer" revolution, y'know, like when CDs first came out? I don't believe the hype and don't believe this new format is making shit more "democratic." Plus, Hi8 gear is incredibly cheap right now because its considered "outdated." I don't think video is ever gonna completely replace film. They are completely different mediums and film will always be around. Sorta like vinyl, yeah?

Lance - Who are the people in SCUMROCK?

Jon Moritsugu - SCUMROCK cast: Amy Davis (was also the director of photography), Jason T. Rail ("J" in FAME WHORE),

Victor of Aquitaine ("George" in FW, also in MFX & TERMINAL USA), Peter Friedrich ("Jody George" in FW), Izabela Wojcik ("Mr. Peepers" in FW) plus newcomers Kyp Malone, Courtney Stephens, and guest appearances by: Craig Baldwin, Danny Plotnick, Valerie Soe, and Lance Hahn (!!!). Woohoo! Lance - What is the writing process like? Is there improvisations, etc?

Jon Moritsugu - The writing process usually takes a few months. I try to be as specific as possible with the dialogue and actions during the rewrites, but stuff sometimes mutates. I've found that pre-planning is completely crucial and I do try to control as many elements as possible to keep the project focused and moving. I also try to keep improvisation to a minimum. However, life is great at throwing unpredictable and completely random shit at you on the day of the filming. I try to be prepared for that.

Lance - Have you ever thought of putting a book out of your scripts?

Jon Moritsugu - I think that's a great idea. I'm glad you think the writing holds up on its own.

Lance - How has distribution been with FAME WHORE? It's your most technically accomplished film and your most accessible. Has it been your most successful?

Jon Moritsugu - Distribution

for FAME WHORE has been all right! I agree that it is my most accessible flick - strong storyline and characters, higher technical values, etc. Check this out - this movie was also up for Academy Award consideration! I shit you not. But unfortunately, it was kicked outta the running cuz of format (it played in Los Angeles in 16mm and not the required 35mm)! FAME WHORE has just been released on video and I'm totally excited about this.

Lance - There are a lot of stories about the hassles with TERMINAL USA and MOD FUCK EXPLOSION. Could you tell us a little more about the stories behind the production?

Jon Moritsugu - Well, uh, let's just say both films were quite

challenging to make. I suppose an extreme low point in TERMINAL USA was about a week into production...we were on a vampire schedule (work from 7PM to 9AM) and the hassles from the executives had just started (this was a project for PBS broadcast). And the whole cast and crew (like 35 people) was jonesing for meat cuz we had vegan caterers, so one of the producers goes out to buy our "dinner" (3AM) and returns with Chinese food, except the only thing she brings back is cartons and cartons of chicken necks! Chicken necks and nothing else! Dude, it was totally fucked up when everyone realized that was our dinner!

As far as MOD FUCK EXPLOSION, one of my cinematic dreams was realized when we filmed London's fantasy sequence in a meat garden constructed from 800 pounds of rotting meat. However, we had to get rid of it immediately



afterwards because it was starting to really heat up! I remember driving around the city late at night with Jen, the art director, and a pick-up truck filled with almost half a ton of meat, looking for a "cool" place to get rid of it. Needless to say, we dumped it in back of a police station.

Lance - Is SCUMROCK the first film you've done since teaching at SF state? How long have you been teaching there?

Jon Moritsugu - Yeah, SCUMROCK is the first flick I've made since I've started the SF state gig. I've been teaching a low-budget film production class there for the past three semester, and let me tell you, it is a kick corrupting minds and turning them onto the cool underground shit.

Lance - Do you force any of your students to work on your films? How would you characterize the kinds of people you teach?

Jon Moritsugu - Nah, nobody is forced to work on my films, it's not like, "oh yeah... now to pass the class you gotta do this work on MY film..." I definitely have gotten some really great help from students (acting, crew, etc), especially on the latest project. As far as these students go, they're all very cool people. Some of 'em are definitely questioning the ways movies are made and trying to figure out more efficient/economical/less bullshit ways of getting stuff done.

Lance - Would you call SCUMROCK a "rock opera?" Will there be any Ken-Russell-isms?

Jon Moritsugu - SCUMROCK is definitely not a rock opera and has nothing whatsoever to do with rock operas! Also, it has nothing whatsoever to do with Ken Russell.

Lance - Except for your cameo, you're not really in FAME WHORE while in SCUMROCK you're one of the main characters. Do you like acting or is it just a necessity for certain films?

Jon Moritsugu - In SCUMROCK I play a fucked-up underground filmmaker! HA! I actually do get quite a kick from acting. Not only is it adrenalizing, but it's also a really cool way to laugh at yourself, don't you know.

Lance - What do you miss the most about Hawaii? What is the one thing you would transplant in SF if you could? Believe it or not, I really miss Zippy's with Grace's running a close second.

Jon Moritsugu - Man, to be totally honest with you, I miss my parents the most. They're chillin' in Hawaii, having a good time. The second thing I miss is probably the nature there. Incredible. If I could transplant one thing from Hawaii to SF, it would definitely be Pidgin English. I dunno, I just think SF would be a much better place if everyone was saying "da kine" and "brah" more often. Yeah, Lance, I totally miss Zippy's too. Their ZIP MIN is ono!

Lance - Do you see a lot of current Hollywood films? Have you ever thought of going for it and trying to play the game and make a big studio film?

Jon Moritsugu - I see an OK amount of Hollywood films. It's not like I am avoiding Hollywood films just cuz they're from Hollywood. As far as trying to make a big studio film - I've heard it is quite a process and at this point, I would rather not get involved in the "process." You know, life is short; you gotta go for what you believe in. Time is precious so don't waste it on shit that you don't respect.

Lance - If a studio gave you free reign and a multi-million dollar budget to make whatever film you want, what would you do?

Jon Moritsugu - Well, I would probably make an extremely lavish; high-production value movie that would be the MOST FUCKED-UP thing to ever hit theaters.

Lance - When was the last time you rode a motorcycle?

Jon Moritsugu - A coupla years ago.

Lance - What do you think of that Danish "dogma" thing? I guess I always thought that all hand held camera and natural lighting had more to do with necessity than aesthetic value.

Jon Moritsugu - I've always been a fan of manifestoes and I think the "dogma95" manifesto is alright. Actually, have you seen "Dancer in the Dark," Lars von Trier's new flick? He's one of the dogma writers and in this film he totally disregards his own manifesto. That's a pretty cool goof move.

Lance - Is there anything you've ever totally regretted? What do you think is the best thing you've done?

Jon Moritsugu - Ok, so there's nothing I'VE TOTALLY REGRETTED, y'know, it's not like I've murdered people to create my "art" and shit... as far as the best thing I've done... well, I would have to say I've been able to make my movies my way. That's a pretty big thing in my opinion.

Lance - What are you 5 fav movies?

Jon Moritsugu - (in no particular order) Liquid Sky, Kustom Kar Kommandoes, Vinyl, Querrelle, Aguirre wrath of god. Ok, so this list totally changes all the time too.

Lance - What's the worst movie you've ever seen?

Jon Moritsugu - The "Romeo and Juliet" remake (with Dicaprio) was one of the shittiest movies ever. Really. Don't see it.

Lance - What's the next step for you? Are you already planning out your next film or are you still caught up in SCUMROCK?

Jon Moritsugu - I'm definitely thinking about my next film, but right now, I'm in the middle of editing SCUMROCK and putting together the soundtrack. Also, I've just released FAME WHORE on video so that's another side project, you know, getting the tape out into the world.

HONEY BEAR RECORDS

ANARCHY IN THE UK

As some of you may already know, I'm in the process of collecting interviews and information for a series of articles and subsequent book focused on the so-called anarcho punk scene of the late '70s and early '80s.

Were you there?

Were you in one of the bands?

Any help and/or information would be greatly appreciated. Here are a few of the bands I'm still trying to track down:

Six Minute War / The Fallout, D&V, Null & Void (Andy Stratton), The Apostles (Andy Martin), Polemic Attack, The Sears, The Naked, Part 1, Assassins Of Hope, No Defences, Tears Of Destruction, Dominant Patri, Earth's Epitaph, A Touch Of Hysteria, Apf Brigade, Anarka And Poppy, Kultur Kampf, Look Mummy Clowns, Hagar The Womb/We Are Going To Eat You, Liberty, Exit Stance, The Waste, Fiend, Hysteria Ward, The Review...

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RECORD REVIEWS

A

ACTION TIME, The "Time Versus The World" LP

Hey everybody, London is really fucking different from anywhere else on the planet. I mean, it's even kind of weird compared to Glasgow and a lot of cool weird shit happens there. Despite what you know or you think you might know about London, there is always something weird going on... And thriving.

The Action Time is a shameless and un-fucked-with-able outfit of boys and girls who have successfully merged the old with the new to create something that is sorta unique and wholly odd. I mean this as the highest possible praise.

I once said that they were a crossbreed of Huggy Bear and early Dexy's. But with this full length, that's only part right. Drums, guitar, and bass are augmented by flash keyboards and even more flash female backing vocals. It's a combination that works for a lot of bands and it's a formula that I'm surprised isn't copied more often. Think Girlfrendo and how they make it work for pop. Think the Headcoates and how they make it work for garage. The list really can go on for pages...

But Action Time also can't be pinned down to one format. Sure, there's a big '60s feel to the whole presentation and the wall of Vox amps is a visual aesthetic as much as aural. But add to the mix an underlying current that in some ways is reminiscent of Northern Soul, which as an American only reminds me of Motown. It's the spirit if not the actual notes.

I don't know if they would consider this a compliment (a lot of bands don't and it's a shame) but there's a certain looseness that works for them. It's something that goes back to what I was saying about London being unlike anywhere. You can go see a band like this, who is a little loose in performance, and they are taken as seriously, if not more so, as the most technically proficient bands. Hell, it's a style.

There's nothing more generic than a band that hits every note perfect and spends all of its energy trying to hit those notes perfectly. No personality. The Action Time is confident and that confidence over-rides any and all need for musical critique. The songs are good. The band can play them. The songs are fitted to the bands ability. It's what they do, so fuck off.

And it all sounds really great. The first time I heard the band, it kind of reminded me of the first time I heard the Huggy Bear side of their split with Bikini Kill. All these classic elements mixed up with that pathological confidence that made something totally new. There might not be a movement behind the Action Time. But it could just be a matter of time.

(Southern Records, PO Box 59, London England, N22 1AR, www.theactiontime.com)

ACTION TIME, The "Rock And Roll" 7"

The a-side is from their debut album. But this is worth tracking down for A) the nice packaging, B) a new rant from the kids and C) a great non-LP b-side called "You've Got To Escape From All The Heartbreak and Pain Of Living In The World Today." Really, don't you need to have that song title?

(Southern Records, PO Box 59, London England, N22 1AR, www.theactiontime.com)

THE ANNIVERSARY - "Designing A Nervous Breakdown" CD

Despite having a record cover so crap, I can't believe no one somewhere along the lines didn't stop them, this is one hell of a pop record. Taking a lot of tired old formulas that make up most of what is thought of as punk (or pop punk) today, The Anniversary inject a healthy dose of college rock sensibilities to, if not in anyway re-invent, the genre to carve their own little spot in the punk world. There's enough of that straight ahead rocking that we've familiarized ourselves with via bands like Weezer and the Get Up Kids to appeal to the extreme youth of America. But there are a lot of curve balls to draw in a jaded old fuck like myself. The occasional Dinosaur Jr like lilt or the Treepeople / Built To Spill ratio of whine to rasp all work to the bands benefit. That and the occasional Beatles-esque 7th chord make this record a head above the rest. There's nothing new under the sun, but this is a great Springtime record for young America.

(Heroes And Villains, PMB 361, 2118 Wilshire Blvd, Santa Monica, CA 90403)

AURORAL CHORUS II: Music Of The Magnetosphere CD

I hate the term "skronk" mostly because of the context in which it was conceived. I dig Lester Bangs. But, no, I'm not some fanatic and that's not why I would dismiss a term created by Robert Christgau. I just hate the idea that everything outside of what's considered normal tonality could be labeled with something. It's not just the presumption. It's the laziness in journalism. But there it is. It's an accepted term staring you in the face and creating it's own connoisseur class and collectors. Despite all efforts to the contrary, I'm sort of one of 'em... much to my chagrin.

So, I tried to resist it. But like most addictive things, I started dabbling a

little and soon found myself on that slippery slope. It started with "White Light, White Heat". Then it became Sonic Youth. Next, it became the Ex. Then it became Ornette Coleman. Now I'm sitting at home alone listening to blips and electronic hums created by natural occurrences in the Earth's atmosphere.

"Auroral Chorus II: Music Of The Magnetosphere" is a challenging listen. But if you are an addict like myself with a high tolerance for abstract recordings and an inexplicable desire for unique sounds and distorted soundscapes, then this CD features some really beautiful sounds. I say that as a fan and not as a so-called expert.

What this CD consists of is 18 field recordings done up in the forests of Canada of sounds sent through radio signals by magnetic storms - the Northern Lights. Mastered straight from the original analog tapes, there were no alterations or effecting of the recording in any way. What you get is a beautiful collection of hums and whistles, surging and cutting, creating a soundtrack to the auroral Borealis. Listening becomes compulsive as the sounds become more and more attractive in their subtlety. This is an organic Metal Machine Music that's beautiful in it's understatement rather than in aggression.

Of course, I'm an uptight asshole and I'm as bound to irony and cynicism as the next new millennium hipster. In other words, a good part of the enjoyment is consideration for the artist / scientist who collected these recordings. Stephen P. McGreevy made these treks alone into the wilderness. Maybe out of convenience. But maybe because he couldn't find anyone to go with him. His passion for the subject matter is touching and humorous. While certainly not on the level of "Project Grizzly", there is a certain ironic chuckle involved in enjoying the CD.

But ultimately it's an inspiring pathology. His determination and joie de vivre is contagious in any contest.

(S. P. McGreevy Productions - PO Box 928 - Lone Pine, CA 93530)

G

GRANDDADDY "A.M. 180 / Here" 7"

I've been avoiding this band like the plague. I mean, all that hype? At best, I'd find them (or him) over-rated. But what do you know, I really like this. Okay, there must be some relation to Sparklehorse here. If not, I think someone owes someone some royalties. It's sweet swinging pop with those innocuous Mr. Rogers vocals that you either love or hate (I love it, but I'm an indie pop loser).

This would almost be pop punk and Weezer or something, BUT then they do "something". I don't know. I like Weezer and I like a lot of pop and pop punk. I like this, but I don't understand why all you have to do is one little weird thing and suddenly you're on a whole new level of sophistication. In this case, it's a weird little keyboard riff that forms the main hook of the song. It's great and I dig it. But does a Casio keyboard represent the fine line between genius and stupid?

I actually like the b-side just as much. As you might have guessed, it's a Pavement cover. A nice distorted version of what I think of as the Pavement's greatest moment to date.

(Big Cat, PO Box 3074, London, W11 4GY, UK, www.big-cat.co.uk)

J

JUNIPER MOON "Volveras?" 7"

Wow! This band might be God! This is the kind of powerful pop punk that can totally re-inspire you when everything around you sounds like the Warp Tour. Needless to say, this band is not from the states. I'm starting to think that nothing this inspired could come from anywhere touched by MTV and KROQ style radio.

Juniper Moon is three guys and a girl from Spain who belt out some of the liveliest music I've heard in ages. All five tracks on this little piece of vinyl is catchy and exciting and just barely long enough for you to need to play it over and over again to prove to yourself that, yes, it is that brilliant. I haven't been this excited about a punk band since the first time I heard Discount.

Elefant Records are no longer the big secret. Get 'em when you find 'em. They're getting pretty good and this is the best release since Eggplant. (Elefant Records, PO Box 331, Las Rozas, 28230, Madrid Spain, www.elefant.com)

JUNIPER MOON "Basado En Hechos Reales" 7"

From Spain come four more great songs following up that amazing first single. Just as essential as "Volveras?" and I'm hoping that next up is a full length.

Shit, it makes me a little sad because all the lyrics are in Spanish and while I love that (in fact I think it's part of this band appeal). That means that they will probably never come over to the states. Nope. Big dumb Americans can't read sub-titles and they won't listen to non-English punk.

Don't be another big dumb American. Get this record and don't miss out.

(Elefant Records, PO Box 331, Las Rozas 28230, Madrid Spain,

K

KICKER "Get Rid Of Him / Turning Left" 7"

Now that Space Rock and Space Lounge and all this shit are dead, what do you call this kind of music? Kicker are two boys and two girls who I've just unfairly categorized with two pretty dated terms. But, hey, I like "indie rock" and most of you like "punk rock" and I can't think of two more dated terms. So, yeah, Kicker might very well be London's most recent answer to Yo La Tengo. But that's cool. They don't sound just like Yo La Tengo and they don't sound just like Stereolab although I'll bet that their collective membership could come up with at least five records from each band in their personal record collections.

Okay, it's a little derivative. But it's still quite nice and both sides are good enough pop tunes to have been the a-side. Now that Yo La Tengo are trying to sound like Stereolab and Stereolab are trying to sound like a Mentos ad, I welcome this single with open arms. I still collect records from both Yo La Tengo and Stereolab hoping and praying that their new material will sound like Kicker. But I'm usually disappointed. Remember when Sonic Youth started getting like that and suddenly we all discovered Polvo? I'm hoping for the same thing will happen here.

So, here is Kicker with some scintillating pop music. Nice vocals, bright guitars and keys and catchy songs.

(For Us Records, Kicker, 8 Milton Ave., London N6 5QE)

KICKER "Said And Done / Chncifer" 7"

Second single (I think) from London's Kicker is not as immediate as their debut. Two tracks that venture deeper into Stereolab "Emperor Tomato Ketchup" andscapes and maybe even a little "Loaded" era Velvets. It's pop music with blasé form characterized by methodic drum rhythms and repetitious guitar down strokes. It's funny, but it's a form and style that can be found in a lot of Velvets stuff (which obviously must influence Kicker as well as Stereolab). But it's more pronounced on the first Modern Lovers record. The a-side of this single (which is brilliant the longer it goes on) owes a lot to "Road Runner" and "Someone I Care About". The Track And Field Organisation, trackandfield99@hotmail.com

ROLAND KIRK - "Domino" CD

I'm not gonna pretend to be some sort of jazz expert or historian. But I am a great fan of Rahsaan Roland Kirk's work and I do know that a lot of people consider his time on Mercury records his most creative and adventurous. "Domino" was Kirk's second record for the label after the groundbreaking "We Free Kings" (at the time a statement about civil rights and not free jazz) and a stint playing for Mingus well represented on the amazing "Oh Yeah" on Atlantic).

No longer thought of as a hack or a gimmick artist, this record is incredibly confident and is crucial in understanding the artist's realm. With one foot in the avant garde and another foot in formalism, this record both let's Kirk run free with his boundary free scales along with his ability to offer strict arrangements is emphasized by a great rhythm section switching between Herbie Hancock, Andrew Hill and Wynton Kelly on piano.

This re-release includes an additional 15 tracks of out takes and different versions. I guess I'm not enough of a scholar to really appreciate this stuff (four versions of "Termini's Corner"?). But there are still some interests to a laymen like myself including the alternative version of the title track and an odd little meditation called "Where Monk And Mingus Live". To bad there aren't any tracks from Kirk's performance at that years Newport Jazz Festival where Kirk first debuted a lot of this material including the classic "A Stritch In Time" (what exactly is a stritch? Is it for real or just another one of Kirk's inventions?). Verve master Edition, www.vervemusicgroup.com

SUE TOMPKINS "The Leanover" 7"

Who is Sue Tompkins and what is going on in her head? Take away Sue Tompkins and you've got a pretty nice little indie rock band with some definite emo type leanings. Catchy tune with some interesting and understated guitar work. Really pretty. Check what I said about emo leanings. It's sort of like Joan Of Arc. It's okay. It's good. But it's not something I'd remember in a few months.

But add to that Sue Tompkins crazy, sociopathological vocals and you've got one of the best singles of the year. She rambles and rants in what appears to be random snippets of various conversations she's heard just walking down a busy street. But her reading is in tune with the music. She doesn't really sing (except for one great moment) but chats along to the rhythm. It's fantastic and it will grab your attention. You've never heard anything like this.

Tugboat Records, 66 Golborne Road, London, W10 5PS, www.tugboatrecords.com

JOHN LURIE "Big Trouble / She's Not A Nurse" 7"

John Lurie is brilliant. He's the closest thing that we've got to a renaissance man. Shit, "Fishing With John"? Inspired and for so many reasons. But long before I saw that show, I was a fan of the music. I love the Lounge Lizards (especially the first records) and I really dig a lot of Lurie's soundtrack work. He's brilliant.

If you don't know that much about him, this may be a weird introduction. This may not sum up his talent, but it sums up his personality. Side A is a fantastic slow jam of trip hop style free jazz with Lurie telling stories like Gil Scott Heron over the top. But these stories are funny as hell. The b-side is a full on punk track that is so unexpected, we (the royal "we" as all fans of John Lurie) can only love him more. Shit, it's not a great punk song. But it's good and you gotta love him (and give him props) for doing it. (For Us Records, no address)

M

MUSEE MECANIQUE - "The Zelinsky Collection" CD

If you're not familiar with the Musee Mecanique, you should start by knowing that it's one of the great attractions of the Bay Area that is completely genuine and, while it doesn't completely sum up the city, it's a significant emblem of San Francisco's quirkiness and uniqueness.

Daniel Galland Zelinsky, who is the museum's founder, is a collector and an eccentric. The museum is a permanent display of antique machines from penny arcades that go back, some over a hundred years. Zelinsky collects and restores these machines and at the Musee Mecanique, they are available for the public, not only to see, but play just as they were enjoyed when they were the cutting edge of arcade technology.

One thing that will always stay with you when visiting is the music. The odd, just vaguely out of tune music pumped through the hundred year old machinery is a key to the museum's ability to take you out of the Bay Area for a moment and put you in another world. Some people think that the music is a little creepy. In a way, I guess it is. But I also think that it's really beautiful. These are all analog sounds that you can't find in any contemporary music. The vague distortion of the imperfect sound systems and the fact that time and non-exact time creates a slight tuning problem all add to the mystique. This CD documents a lot of that music. With any luck, like the cover suggests, this will be the first of many. (1090 Point Lobos, San Francisco, CA 94121)

S

ARCHIE SHEPP "Blasé" LP

Get Back is a fucking weird record label. What is their fucking deal? I don't know what the hell it is. But it's pretty cool. Punk rock and avant garde jazz? These Italians are crazy!

Okay, this is one of several amazing vinyl re-releases of classic American, free artists from the French label, BYG. It was part of a series they did called 'Actuel', identified by uniformed and unique record covers. The series also included work from Don Cherry, the Art Ensemble of Chicago and more.

This 1969 recording of Archie Shepp, I feel, is one of his greatest documents. His playing is especially frenetic and schizophrenic. His bursts and blasts are unlike his later, blues-ier recordings and is also less complicated by the heavy Coltrane influence of his earlier recordings.

Certainly the context of the times had some influence on the outcome of this record. Perhaps the experimentation of the times and other competing artists spurred him on and kept him moving forward into uncharted territory. Maybe the freedom of the times allowed him to make these recordings, unlike a lot of his later stuff (good as it was). Maybe it was just the style of the times as shaped by artists like Eric Dolphy, Ornette Coleman and Albert Ayler. Either way, it's unlikely a record like this could have been made 10 years earlier or later.

One of the things that I've really loved about a lot of his stuff is his use of poetry. His commitment to black power issues, made the message of his music critical to his wanting to create. On this record, that is represented by some amazing vocals by Jeanne Lee spoken, sung and screamed. It's content and attack could almost allow you to view the recording as a more militant response to Max Roach's "Freedom Now Suite".

Additionally, there are some pretty great performances by the "guest" musicians on this session. Lester Bowie's playing is tasteful and is a cradling juxtaposition to Shepp on "There Is A Balm In Gilead". Chicago Beau and Julio Finn also contribute some aggressive harmonica playing making for the center piece of the lead track, "My Angel".

Again, I'm not totally sure what's going through the minds of the folks at Get Back. But this is one amazing record and seeing it on quality vinyl is a miracle. Get this while you can.

(Get Back - Aretina, 25 - 50069 Sieci (Firenze) Italy)

T

THAI ELEPHANT ORCHESTRA - CD

So, does this count as outsider art?

Yeah, I guess the title really says it all. This is a CD recording of six elephants (and that's not some code name for anything. We're talking trunks and tusks.) playing music over their own design and direction. This is not some circus trick. There's no fucking ring leader whipping the elephants making them play "Oh When The Saints..." or some bullshit. This is really a bunch of elephants left to their own devices with a bunch of instruments to improvise.

Okay, here's a little background info. Dave Soldier and Richard Lair are scientists and zoologists who work and have been working with elephants in Thailand for some time. As most people know, there are a lot of miseries in that field. First of all, the elephant population has been reduced from 100,000 back at the last turn of the century to little over 2,000 today. The surviving elephants are still being forced to do dangerous labor for companies working in Thailand and others are put at risk through irresponsible tourist organizations.

To put a bit of a spin on the situation, the two doctors decided to bring their mutual love of music into their day work. Working in a traditional Thai musical scale, they had built several musical instruments specially designed for the elephant's anatomy.

So, this recording, which is quite fantastic, represents the improvised and dare I say "free" music created by elephants on slit drums, marimbas, Thai renats, diddley bow, gongs, harmonicas and some sort of keyboard. Uh, the elephants are pretty good and it really freaks me out how, uh, rhythmic they are. I mean, if this thing hadn't been written up in the New York Times, I would almost think it was a hoax. But I guess it's for real and therefore, pretty fucking impressive. But I have to admit, it's almost worth it just to see the photos of the elephants smiling and playing music.

(Mulatta Records, www.mulatta.org)

V

V/A "Bullshit Detector 2" 2xLP

So, I've been doing my research for this anarcho book and series of articles and I've really gone back to this record more than any other. Fuck, I remember everyone telling me what a piece of shit it was when it came out. You know, some of the bands are pretty weak and the recordings are all over the place. Yeah, yeah, I nodded my head in agreement.

But secretly, I've always really loved this record. In fact, I probably like this more than most of the anarcho stuff. I remember when this record came out. I'll try to recapture some of that in this little review...

There's a feeling that hits you straight away with these releases: there's something going on and it's dangerous. These records look like ransom notes from terrorists. They talk about things that go against the grain of what most people would think of as being in good taste... Politically in particular... The layout makes each band seem like a terrorist cell. They've all got their agendas and they're working towards that end.

You listen to the record and it's not your typical punk rock compilation. There is no attempt to clean up rough recordings. There are no attempts to hide iffy musicianship. Music is a means to an end. The varied sounds become a wash and the whole record becomes an entity of its own rather than a representation of any one band.

Even the idea that it's a compilation of bands becomes false as there are sound collages and spoken word bits interspersed with all the music. Even the "bands" are often less than what one would consider traditional punk.

Listening to this record was like diving under water and opening your eyes for the first time. There's something really intimidating about this record. It challenges you intellectually and forces you to find out a lot of things for yourself. It challenges you to think beyond terms of a normal rock band. The music that is recorded really poorly... The bands that aren't complete and can't play... The sound collages... It all ends up coming from the same perspective and therefore can only be judged as such. There are no bands after a while. There are only sounds.

For better or for worse, I find that I can appreciate noise in its own right and can judge noise, even when made in mistake, by its own merits.

V/A "Hol #1 - Roady Music From Vietnam 2000" CD

I've always wanted to go the Vietnam, not only because of my personal interest in the American War, but also because I love culture shock. I thrive on that specific kind of fear of the unknown. I find it an exciting justification in my belief that all moral codes and religious / political doctrines are synthetic and fabricated in the self-interest of whatever society or culture created it.

Yeah, yeah, yeah... More anarchist rhetoric... But think about it this way. Culture shock is like taking acid for the first time. It's a shock to the system and a

shock to the brain forcing you to re-evaluate your so-called reality. Acid made me question reality around me. As a result, it made me question my entire belief system. I felt the same sort of thing the first time I got lost in a crowd in Hong Kong.

But for those of you who aren't up for eating liberty caps in downtown Ho Chi Minh City, here's a record that will, at the very least, blow your mind. This is street music from Vietnam and there's nothing in the world like it.

This CD is a collection of field recordings done out in the streets of Vietnam. It documents the street musicians and others as they play their music for the sake of music (and usually some spare change). There's everything here from traditional folk music to full on noise and a lot of weird aberrations in the middle.

There are several groups and performers here whose style exists to accommodate performing in the streets. Eo Sinh and Nam Nao are a daughter and father duet. She sings and sells Lotto coupons while he plays electric guitar. The sound is nice and gritty as the vocals are sung with a megaphone and the guitar is powered by a moped battery. Their song is a Viet Cong love song called "VC Love Song". Nam Nao is also blind. I mention this because it seems like most of the street musicians are handicapped or deformed in some way, either from being in the war or from side effects of Agent Orange.

Some of my favorite stuff is the crazy punk-like noise of Santana V and the Dead Man's Orchestra. Santana V are a trio that blast out weird garage or surf like noise with drums, guitar and trumpet/flute. The sound is great and the drums sound perfect.

Dead Man's Orchestra is just that. They are a "marine-style funeral combo sounding like some New Orleans-Trash-Punk-Free Jazz..." The drums blast away at warp speed and the horns charge in like Albert Ayler on crack. I'm not really sure if it's a group of immensely talented musicians going out of control or a well-orchestrated piece of music being performed by crazies. Apparently, part of the cacophony comes from the fact that brass instruments can never stay in tune in Vietnam due to the climate.

There's a lot more great stuff here but nothing that could accurately be described as "rock". Though I'm guessing it's not true, I'm wondering if Vietnam is one of the few places where punk just didn't stick. Who needs guitar solos when you can have badass mouth organ solo!

There's a real funny phenomenon in the punk world to search out punk rock and hardcore in every corner of the globe. Like it's some sort of sign that punk is winning by finding a band doing Ramones covers in Uzbekistan. I have to admit, I'm fascinated if not strictly for sociological reasons (slowly, that's becoming the extent of my interest in ALL punk).

But in some ways I find it really disappointing because it usually is an indicator of how narrow the scope is of most punks' musical interest. The very people who you would think would be the most open to new and outrageous music are the ones with the narrowest musical boundaries. It sucks and it makes me feel like punk and hardcore bands in all these countries are just another part of American Imperialism in the world. It's cultural imperialism and we're gentrifying the neighborhood.

Of course, that's a bit of an over-simplification. But it makes me sad when I meet someone who I think is really cool and interesting. Then one day I'll happen to check out their record collection and find that there's nothing but punk rock. You may have 1,000 records in your collection. But if it's all punk and hardcore, you're as closed-minded as your grandparents.

(Trikont, Kistlerstrasse 1, Postfach 901055, D 81510 Munchen Germany)

DVD & VIDEO REVIEWS

"Imagine The Sound" (directed by Ron Mann, Home Vision Cinema) video

Did anyone watch Ken Burns' "Jazz" documentary? Did anyone hate it as much as I did? I couldn't believe the last two installments and how brief they were. Shit, every obscure, no-talent, trite musician from the swing era was covered in detail. But names like Albert Ayler, Rahsaan Roland Kirk, Eric Dolphy and Paul Bley were not even mentioned. My God, he spent more time at the end with a high school jazz band than he did on Ornette Coleman and almost all of free jazz.

Cecil Taylor was only mentioned as a whipping boy taking all the hits from the squares (like Branford Marsalis) that showed just how close-minded and threatened they feel about new things in jazz. It really reminded me of a few years back when 60 Minutes did a cheap and stupid attack on contemporary art. The shallow rants by Morley Safer conveniently avoided conceptual and cerebral motivations for art that both challenge surface art forms as well as expand the field of creative possibility. Maybe Cecil Taylor is the Cy Twombly of jazz...

Did anyone notice that Wynton Marsalis basically said the same thing over and over again? It didn't really matter who he was talking about, Coltrane, Parker,

Gillespie, Duke Ellington... This is what he basically said about all of them: "He was great. He was unique. He was my favorite. He was REALLY great." It was almost like he didn't really know what any of these guys sounded like. He certainly didn't know how to describe their sound...

I could go on forever about what a shame it was about the series. At the time, I was so flabbergasted that I immediately ran to "Imagine The Sound" two times in a row.

"Imagine The Sound" is my favorite jazz documentary and is one of my favorite documentaries of all time. It's the most informative ANYTHING I've come across in terms of describing and discussing free and avant-garde jazz. The film, which was the first feature documentary made by Ron Mann ("Grass", "Comicbook Confidential"), was actually made in 1981, over a decade after the explosion of experimental jazz. Focusing on four important and celebrated figures (Cecil Taylor, Archie Shepp, Paul Bley and Bill Dixon) allowing them to reflect on their careers and those around them that, in many ways, defined the sound of '60s jazz.

Plus, there's music. The music in this film is brilliant. The new and original pieces by all four of them are surprisingly fresh and inspired despite it being recorded in the stagnant early '80s. Simple edits with interestingly framed shots work to the directors advantage as the music is emphasized and never distracted from by the filmmaking.

The interviews are all really great as well. Cecil Taylor mixes splashes of profundity with a delivery that is both conversational and challenging. Like his music, it's not enough to just listen to it and let it wash over you. Even his conversation is presented in a way that forces you to work to get the inner meaning... or at least whatever meaning he's trying to get across. His solo piano performances are whacked out and at times have as much to do with performance art as they do with music. One of the film's high points is Taylor reading one of his freaked out, stream of consciousness poems.

Paul Bley is also a bit strange in his delivery. His choice of words is strange and intriguing as if it were written by David Mamet or something. But this isn't pretension. He's just a little off kilter with the rest of the world. His stories are brilliant and self-deprecating descriptions of the early days at the Hillcrest Club in Los Angeles and the Five Spot in New York with Ornette Coleman and the scene that would eventually produce the album "Free Jazz". Bley's solo piano performances are great deconstructions of familiar musical territory and the withdrawal of aesthetic tools of standard time and tonality.

Archie Shepp is exactly what you expect and want. With one foot in the musical revolution and one foot in the political revolution, Shepp speaks with equal adoration and respect for Coltrane and Malcolm X. In some ways, his music is the most accessible of the four as he in some ways bridges part of the gap between Charlie Parker and John Coltrane. It's great to hear his candid stories like how he found his style by trying to be like Coltrane and eventually giving up because he couldn't do it.

Bill Dixon is the least known of the three and for whatever reason, the most fascinating. Like Shepp, he developed his style by playing with Taylor. But his trumpet playing has more to do with almost industrial sounds of the city. It's car horns blending into soothing other world rhythms pierced by Morse code blips. His interviews are so lucid and down to Earth, you find yourself clinging to every word. Not only does he accurately describe a loft scene that included all the big players like Ornette Coleman and Eric Dolphy hanging out and jamming with other musicians many of whom were never heard from again. But he also connects it to everything else that was going on in New York City at the time like the Judson Dance Theater where Rauschenberg was doing work. The connection between the jazz avant-garde of Ornette Coleman and Eric Dolphy and the artists like Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns is never talked about. But there it is, documented in this film.

Really, this is a great film even if the music isn't your cup of tea. It may be a little difficult to relate to some of the music. But the stories are great and they do get across the sincerity and intentions of the artists, which may cause the listener to further, explore the free jazz of the '60s.

But then again, there are only four artists covered here. It's great and engaging and I would recommend it to anyone. But it does leave me feeling like there is a sad lack of good, if not great, jazz documentaries.

“Fishing With John” (Directed by John Lurie, Criterion Collection) DVD

For some reason, the greatest appeal of CDs has been largely ignored. As a vinyl person, even I have to concede that CDs are great value for your money. The fact that you can fit 70 minutes of the high quality sound without any degradation is a KO punch. But most CDs don't really take advantage of this miracle of modern science.

The same can be said about DVDs. There's nothing more disappointing than opening a DVD and finding that there's zero bonus material or just a bunch of lame trailers.

So the Criterion Collection has become the Ryko of film. The highest quality prints of classic films are even further enhanced by bonus material on almost all of their packages. Every possible bit of additional footage, director's cuts, documentaries and, most importantly, director and cast commentaries. There's an amazing consistency in the quality of their releases. It's a shame that not more execs from the big DVD companies take inspiration from the Criterion Collection.

"Fishing With John" is merely one of many visionary creative hats that John Lurie wears. This incredible Television series verges on the surreal while at the same time is possibly the most unpretentious program to ever be shown on Bravo or the Independent Film Channel. Previously, they had been released as three videos. But Criterion collects them all for one package adding commentary by Lurie as well as a music video for his band, the Lounge Lizards.

Each of the six episodes consists of a fishing trip hosted by John Lurie and features one of his indie film friends. Equal parts talk show parody and fishing show parody, the guests include (in order) Jim Jarmusch, Tom Waits, Matt Dillon, Willem Dafoe and Dennis Hopper. In various locations (everywhere from Maine to Thailand), their attempts at fishing professionalism become farce by circumstance and the extremely limited ability of some of the guests. It's irony being used against itself.

Lurie sets the tone for each issue with one of the funniest theme songs ever allowed on National Television. He edits in absurd sound effects (the sounds of school children while on the high seas, the sounds of pigs and cows over footage of seagulls) with brilliantly deadpan narration by Robb Webb. "He just says something and it sounds true" says Lurie. The effect definitely falls into the category of "you had to be there" as it's hilarity is mostly in the straight man delivery.

Quite often, the interaction between these indie hipsters is pretty damned funny as well. It really is funny to hear smart people engaged in completely mundane dialog.

Jarmusch: "So what are the great shark movies?"
Both: "Jaws"
(silence)

The director commentary provided by Lurie is quite intriguing to a fan like me. If you're part of the cult of followers that became addicted to the show either when it was on TV or through the video release, the commentary is worth the time. He's very candid about some of the personality differences of each shoot as well as the difficulty he had with the Japanese company that was funding his travels. But also there are funny incites to the actual production. Things you never would have guessed. For example, during his fishing adventure in Jamaica with Tom Waits, not only was Waits genuinely angry at him, but they couldn't catch any fish. So, like other "real" fishing shows, they fake it with by putting fish on their lines before the cameras are on, dragging them in pretending that they're hooking live fish.

John Lurie may be most known for his band, the Lounge Lizards and his commitment to independence as well as innovation and creativity. From the bands early days in 1979, he called the band "fake jazz" which has become a term without derogatory intent (largely due to Lurie's talent). Perhaps in the same spirit "Fishing With John" could be known as "fake documentary". It's fake. But it's equally respectable in it's own right.

Deep Red (directed by Dario Argento, Anchor Bay) DVD

This came out just before I left for Austin. Now, I've been a fan of Dario Argento for a long time. One of my earliest childhood memories was the TV commercial for "Suspiria" with the skull combing its hair reciting the "roses are red..." poem. It was simple and totally horrifying. I can't put my finger on what it was about it that was so frightening. But I still remember it vividly and it gives me chills. In some ways, it freaks me out more than anything in the movie.

So, that's the main root of my obsession with Argento. I'm also continually drawn in by his sophisticated and intellectual approach to horror films in particular. This genre has never been taken seriously by our cultural elite and with rare exception ("Silence Of The Lambs" being the last I can remember) is kept on the outside of America's most pathetic figureheads, the Motion Picture Academy. It's a self-fulfilling prophecy as the more sophisticated and intellectual filmmakers are therefore drawn to other subject matter and genre. At first maybe to create their own name. But eventually, they become trapped in the vicious cycle of pleasing your audience rather than pleasing yourself. Even without becoming stereotyped in their themes and style, these potentially groundbreaking film makers still become limited by their own design even while re-inventing themselves (Tarantino, et al). You really can't be the tortured artist and have a party at the same time.

For a time, the horror genre was (and maybe still is) a way of safely circumventing the omnipresent system of knee jerk analysis which in itself was nothing more than a veneer for all out commercialization. The so-called independent scenes of Miramax and the like are little more than scraps thrown to the dog. They keep an audience starved for an intelligent alternative to the Hollywood system controlled and placated. But in it's absolute dismissal, horror was a way for many directors to

gain the freedom they needed to try out adventurous and avant garde techniques in both story and aesthetics.

Dario Argento's films of the '70s are a great representation of that freedom. While his scope has ranged from horror to thriller to mystery to even some spaghetti western, there's **generally** been a level of experimentation as well.

"Deep Red" was Argento's fifth film. In many ways, "Deep Red" (more widely known outside the US as "Profondo Rosso") represents his first completely realized film in terms of his experimentation in camera work (he had spent years honing his skills as a technician) and his extremely candid exploration of the human psyche both in terms of insanity and it's social cause and purpose. For that, "Deep Red" is truly Freudian filmmaking.

The story of "Deep Red" is a complex mystery that starts with two friends. Bonded by their talents as jazz pianists, they otherwise lead quite different lifestyles. The protagonist, Marc Daly (played by David Hemmings of "Blow Up") is the successful concert pianist in Rome on professional business. Carlo, on the other hand, (played by Gabriele Lavia of "Revenge Of The Living Dead" and "Beyond The Door") is an alcoholic who plays for bar and dinner audiences to pay his bills. His pleasures aren't from his art but rather through his decadence as displayed as the film unravels. The difference between the two is perfectly summed up by Carlo when he declares, "We both play piano good. But I'm the proletarian of the keyboard and you're the bourgeois. You play for art and you enjoy it. I play for survival. It's not the same thing."

After one of their late night chats, Marc witnesses a murder on his way into his apartment. From the street he sees a woman killed in the apartment above his. The woman, Helga Ulman (Macha Meril), is a known psychic who just earlier had a given a lecture on psychic phenomenon that was interrupted by her picking up the signal from a killer in the room. Though Marc rushes up to the room, Helga is already dead with her throat slit and body butchered by glass and cleaver.

While giving his statement to the police, Marc confounded by the knowledge that something is missing from the apartment. He's convinced that a painting is missing, though he can't place which one it was or what it was of. Perplexed by this for the rest of the movie, he becomes determined to unravel the mystery himself and therefore putting himself in the path of the killer.

His situation is complicated at first by an Italian newspaper reporter named Gianna Brezzi (played by Daria Nicolodi who upon auditioning for the part fell in love with Argento igniting a partnership that would last for years) who insists on following Marc around pointing questions at him. Unlike the archetype of the "nosey woman getting in the man's way", Gianna right away proves to be more clever and stronger than Marc. A scene emphasizes this where she beats him at arm wrestling. He may be the protagonist. But she's no damsel in distress.

From here the story grows into an elaborate giallo* tracing back several years of violence while bring the death toll up in the presence. The violence is magnified by the acts use of convenience. Rather than some supernatural force killing people in supernatural ways, the deaths are painfully believable and therefore manage to get under your skin in the same way "real life" and autopsy films can. Death by scalding in a tub or by being slammed into a sharp corner is a lot more tangible and therefore believable, than a gun shot.

The film also uses intense framing of shots to create a strange combination of terror and intrigue. While the shock may make you want to cover your eyes, the strange camera angles and perspectives keep you looking. Partly to make sure you saw what you saw. But also because in the process of adjusting your vision, you can possibly pick up details and clues you wouldn't recognize from a normal perspective. Not only does Argento anticipate this, he revels in it. The crux of the film is based on the idea that Marc saw something earlier on and can't remember what he saw. The audience sees the same thing and for the rest of the film is regretting that they hadn't paid more attention.

Some of the greatest images, however, don't necessarily exist to propel the anxiety that clouds over most of the film. A close up of a tape being threaded through a player is strangely as engrossing as anything in, say, "Diva" or "Evil Dead".

I suppose in many ways Argento's films appeal to me as both **snob** and outsider.

On the one hand, I'm so offended by the way Hollywood dumbs down all of its films as if it's all the public has the capacity to appreciate. Of course, the public eat it up as it's all they've ever been shown. I find myself being a snob because I can't tolerate the idiocy of most Hollywood films, so I find myself purposefully immersed in foreign films and so-called "art" films. Argento's experimentation and his

association with others like Bertolucci and Fellini (in fact, "Deep Red" was co-written with Bernadino Zapponi who also co-authored "Roma" and "Satyricon") has made him acceptable to film snobs everywhere.

On the other hand, he is never influenced by trends and does things that at times seem like purposeful efforts to rid himself of the "hipster" tag he's been saddled with. Despite what a lot of critics want to believe, there is always depth to Argento's scripts. It's not all surface experimentation. Certainly there are times when a scene is shaped with the intention of trying out some new lighting effect or a new camera. But this isn't art for art's sake. There aren't any simple answers like you can easily skim off the top of Romero or Carpenter's films. Argento is willing to sacrifice himself to find out what's at the bottom of the human soul. Even at his worst, he won't let you go with a black and white answer. There are many stories of how suicidal he was while working on "Deep Red". He'd spend all night awake blocking the windows of his hotel room to prevent himself from jumping out. Then he'd show up fresh faced and eager for the set.

This doesn't come with too much extra. I guess there's really not much out there. There is a brief documentary celebrating the 25th anniversary of the film with interviews with Argento and Zapponi (just before he died). Also, the trailers are included.

But what is really great about this is it's finally the proper director's cut of the film. There's an additional 25 minutes of footage, which not only gives a little more depth to Marc. But also broadens his relationship with Gianna (the humorous sequences are a little odd).

I'm not sure if I've bought anything from Anchor Bay that wasn't Argento related. But I'm starting to really dig this company.

* - Gialla is an Italian film style of suspense mystery. In some ways the Italian noir, it got it's name from the old detective mystery books who's pages turned yellow with age.

SHORT REVIEWS

"Westway To The World" I love the Clash and I spent a pathetic amount of time trying to watch bits and pieces of this documentary on their website. But finally it's available... even if only in the UK. A pretty thorough chronology of the band's history crammed into just under an hour and a half. While ignoring the later period five piece Clash and not spending much time on pre-Clash bands (there's some mention of the 101er's, but nothing on Mick's bands.), it's still a really fun film with loads of amazing footage that I've certainly never seen before. The interviews are really quite touching. Especially with hindsight and the general knowledge of the bands demise, the interviews with Mick Jones seem especially heart wrenching. It's a great story with a really sad ending. (SMV)

"Twitch And Shout" I just rediscovered this movie. A fantastic documentary about tourette syndrome by Laurel Chiten, a photojournalist who suffers from it. Rather than being bogged down with self-pity and sad life stories, the people interviewed are all really interesting with amazing insights. They can laugh about tics and they expect you to as well when they re-tell certain stories. Especially fascinating is a look at an annual conference of people with tics. Yeah, they've got TS. But they're also really funny (and sweet) nerds. (New Day Films, 22D Hollywood Ave, Ho-Ho-Kus, NJ 07423)

"Dialogues With Madwomen" As the box says "...captures the experiences of seven women of diverse ages and backgrounds who have experienced the dark side of the imagination..." I believe that most of these women are from the Bay Area. The filmmaker, Allie Light, is from here. What they all share in common (filmmaker included) is madness. Fascinating interviews with multiple personalities, manic-depressives, schizophrenics and euphorics. It's a bold step into a world that's almost always dealt with voyeuristically. There's a fear of this subject matter which is probably why until now there hasn't been a documentary so clever and creative. In addition to the interviews, there are amazing re-enactments of the stories. I think the most fascinating was that of a schizophrenic who's various personalities decided to leave presents for each other one Christmas. (Light-Saraf Films, 264 Arbor St., San Francisco, CA 94131)

"Manion" I saw this movie once before a long time ago with my Mom, of all people. I've always had a bit of a weird fascination (is there any other kind?) with the Manion family and the whole Helter Skelter myth. When I was a little kid, the first books I remember reading that weren't for kids were "Macbeth", "Stranger In A Strange Land" (bleh!!!) and "Helter Skelter". Some kids read "Forever" by Judy

Blume. I had Sadie Mae Glutz and Lulu. Ah, to be young and stupid again. This documentary was made in 1972 while the girls and Manson were still on death row. In fact, the family was still a solid functioning unit and there were no real indications of what would become involvement in the Aryan Brotherhood. Interviewed in this are people on both sides. In opposition are the women who were in prison with the Manson girls, several guys who fled the family and the bug himself, Bugliosi. On the family side are such well known names as Squeaky Fromme, Sandra Good, Mother Mary, Gypsy, Nancy Pitman and others. It's fascinating how the killings have become a sign. Who's not a little frightened of Manson? But it's a well known fact that he didn't kill anyone. It's very likely that Tex Watson was the only killer. There certainly have been bigger, more horrific killings, even in U.S history. So what's the fascination and fear? No answers in this film. In fact, the movie makes a lot of the family come across as... uh... kinda crazy. They were so upset that they allegedly killed the filmmaker. Still, strangely fascinating and definitely one for the time capsule. (American International)

"When Women Kill" I'll admit it. I rented this video for all the wrong reasons. It was made by Lee Grant (who's one of my favorite actresses of all time) and one of the women featured in it is former Manson girl, Leslie Van Houton. But, really, that's the least that this film has to offer. What I was presented with is a moving documentary about women in prison serving life sentences. Profound interviews with women most of whom are in prison for having either killed an abusive significant other or for having killed on behalf of an abusive significant other. A fascinating sociological study in the furthest extent of how male dominated culture affects women's psychology. Most of the women seem completely out of place in prison. Unlike anything you could imagine about women serving life sentences, many of them walk around like ghosts. Full of regret, not for the killing. But for having gotten involved with an abusive man in the first place. A very simple style of interviews (surely out of necessity, all the interviews are done in prison) allows for totally objectivity. (MPI Home Video)

"Whoever Says The Truth Shall Die" So, who did kill Pasolini? This documentary is partially a biography of filmmaker and poet Pier Paolo Pasolini. But it's also a dialog about his place in Italian cinema and a re-evaluation of his murder. Philo Bregstein's documentary is stark and understated with clips of Pasolini's many films and readings of his poetry being the main engine of the story. Interviews with Bernardo Bertolucci and Laura Betti also help give a better picture of the man and his ambition as well as new insight to the atmosphere in Italy at the time of his

death. While the official line is that Pasolini was killed by a teenaged male prostitute (Pasolini certainly acquiesced to these vices) it's become more and more obvious that several people took part in his killing. This film makes a pretty good argument of there being a fascist conspiracy. This is still a critical issue. Certainly, most people reading this are familiar with Pasolini's films ("Accatone", "Salo: 120 Days of Sodom", "Oedipus Rex", "The Gospel According To St. Matthew", etc.). But who knew that his death was very possibly an assassination by right wing extremists? (Facets Video)

J CHURCH LIVE NEW ON HONEY BEAR RECORDS

One of the things that I really loved about Bluurg Records was that in addition to the more visible catalog, Dick always released a number of demo and live cassettes of his bands and others. I've always wanted to do this with Honey Bear Records and J Church. Instead of cassette tapes, these titles are all CDRs.

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